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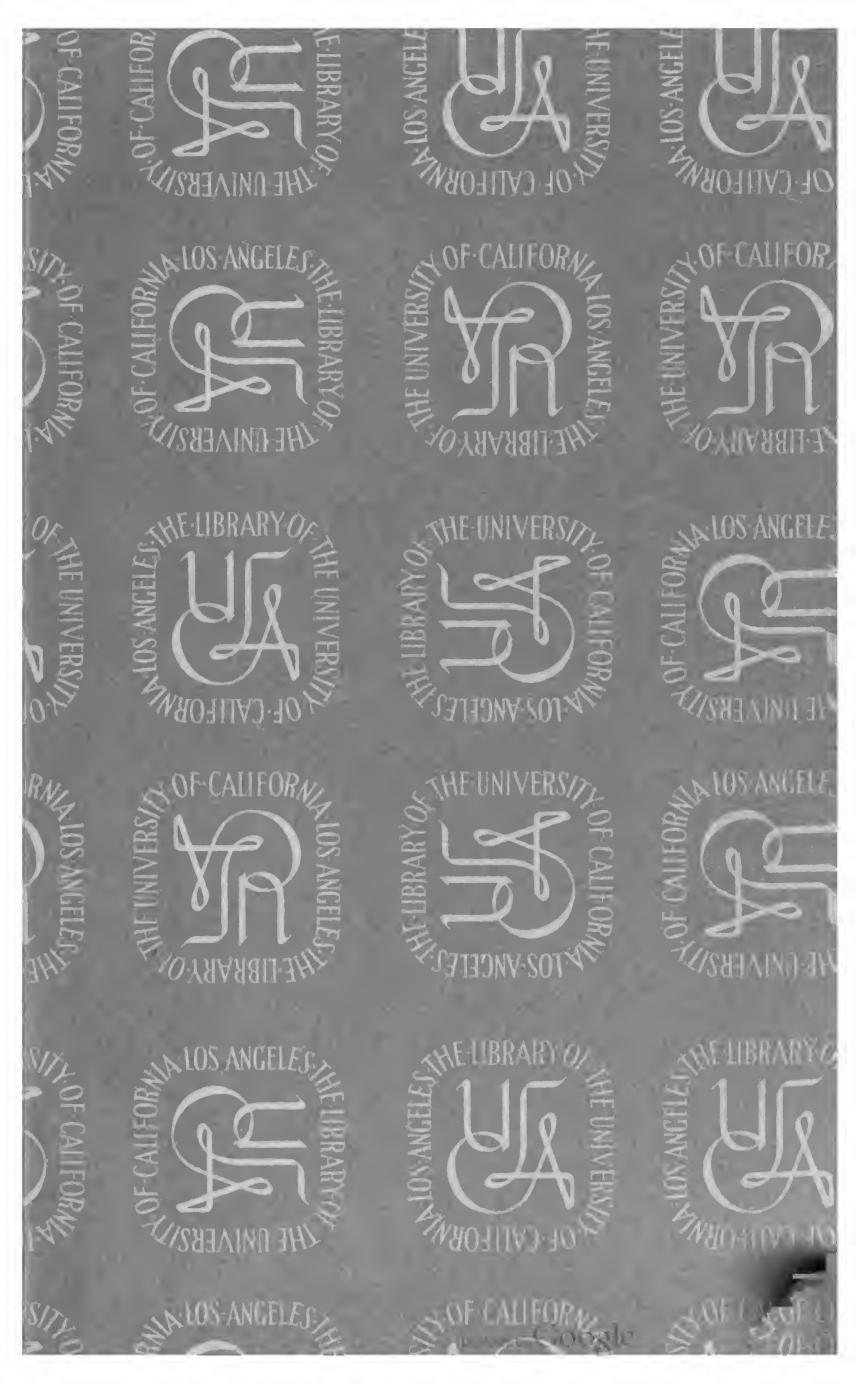
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**THE FRIARS**  
**AND**  
**HOW THEY CAME TO ENGLAND**



# THE FRIARS

AND

## HOW THEY CAME TO ENGLAND

BEING  
A TRANSLATION OF THOMAS OF ECCLESTON'S  
"DE ADVENTU F.F. MINORUM IN ANGLIAM"

DONE INTO ENGLISH  
WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON THE SPIRIT AND  
GENIUS OF THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS

BY  
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TO  
V. M. G.  
WHOSE DELIGHT IN  
THE STORY OF THE FRIARS  
SUGGESTED THIS  
BOOK





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# INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

## ON THE SPIRIT AND GENIUS OF THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS

### I.

THE Friars Minor, or Franciscan Friars, as they are popularly called, arrived in England in the year 1224. They came at a moment when events were swiftly moving towards a decisive crisis in our national history. The feudal system, assailed on the one side by the Crown, and on the other by the rising burgher class, was passing away, ending a noble history in a not altogether inglorious death; for feudalism had saved Europe from barbaric licence and had laid the foundations of civilised society, and it left behind it a legacy of noble deeds and beautiful thought which we do well to cherish. But its day was over. A new spirit

had come upon the people. The townsfolk, conscious of the power which trade had put into their hands, were lifting their heads against both baron and King. In the universities—but lately come into existence—a spirit of democratic freedom was awake, which frequently brought the students into collision with the authorities both spiritual and civil. The towns and universities were, in fact, the centres of the revolution which was irresistibly changing the face of England, and, indeed, of nearly all Europe, and converting the mediæval monarchy into the modern nation.

For a time it seemed as though State and Church must collapse. The Crown, constantly at variance with the baronage, endeavoured to secure the support of the towns by the grant of immunities and privileges which strengthened the burghers against the barons, but also put a weapon into the burghers' hands, which they were not slow to turn against the Crown when occasion arose. Bent upon achieving their own freedom, the townsfolk at one time sided with the King against the barons; at another time

with the barons against the King. The eventual issue, as we know, was the establishment of the constitutional form of monarchy, and the admittance of the burghers to a voice in the new parliament.

The Church was not less affected by the new developments than was the State ; for the towns and the universities were in great measure alienated from ecclesiastical control. So far the English universities—of later growth than those of France and Italy—had not sufficient strength to exercise any marked influence upon the country, but they were becoming conscious of power, and the tendency to revolt, which made the university as dangerous a factor in mediæval politics as it is to-day in Russian, was not wanting at Oxford. The intellectual freedom of the university, so fruitful on the Continent in heresies, had as yet borne no heresy in England ; nevertheless, the energy suddenly imparted to Oxford by Vacarius a few years previous to the arrival of the Friars was bearing fruit, and the Church in England had before it a new problem, for which it was totally unprepared.

Then there was the new difficulty with the towns. Under the feudal system the Church, frequently at war with both the Crown and the barons, could yet count upon the allegiance of the people, to whom she was ever a sure protector against tyranny and oppression. Moreover, as long as the people remained attached to the soil they were largely under the direct influence of the monastic institutions which covered the whole kingdom, and they were well cared for, both spiritually and temporally. With the rush of the country labourers into the towns at this period, a large proportion of the population, and, generally speaking, the more intelligent and energetic, were cut off from monastic influence and drifted away from the Church. In the towns there were but few priests, and these were frequently but ill-educated and unfitted to cope with the difficulties of the situation. The conditions of town life, then as now, tended to materialise the minds of the people, thus suddenly withdrawn from the refining influence of the abbey with its noble ceremonial and well-ordered habits. The

majority of those who migrated into the towns were unskilled in labour and without means of support, so that the towns speedily became habitations of a squalor and misery unknown in the open country. There were huddled together the poor wretches whom the dream of money easily obtained had allured, and who now fell out of the ranks of labour and formed the hungry multitude. Starved and diseased, they wore out their lives without comfort in this world and with but little faith in the next. It was the same all over Europe, wherever commercial centres were established; but beneath the grey skies of these Northern countries even squalor becomes more squalid than in the sunlit towns of the South.

But side by side with these wretched denizens of the towns was the prosperous merchant class who governed the towns and were inclined to identify the Church with the feudal system against which they were constantly at war. To them bishop and abbot were but baron in mitre and cope. Viewing the Church thus, they resented her power and distrusted her influence.



The burghers as curtly refused the Pope's demand for money which he claimed to levy as temporal overlord of Christendom, as they closed their coffers when the King called for unwarrantable subsidies. Moreover, the merchant, traveling from place to place, lent willing ears to heresies, and carried them about the country and held to them in the towns. Accustomed to assert himself in commerce and politics, he saw no reason why he should not exercise his own judgment in taking up new opinions in matters of religion, nor were the town clergy fitted to oppose the sharp-witted burgher in argument. Hence the burgher class had little respect for the Church. But the division between Church and burgher had its origin in other than intellectual difficulties and the love of political freedom. Wealth had brought luxury, and luxury was sapping the moral sense. Traders with the East had brought back with them dreams of Oriental voluptuousness, which they too readily sought to realise, and the towns bred an immorality hitherto unknown in these hardier climes, and in their immorality they be-

came irreligious. Unfortunately for the Church the clergy had lost the respect of the people and were not untainted by the prevailing vices. The world had taken its revenge upon the Church for the severe discipline and undaunted courage with which she had set herself to tame the wild northern spirit of earlier days. In order to rear society out of the barbarous chaos, she had necessarily to immerse herself in all the political and social enterprises of the times; she had necessarily to be temporal ruler as well as spiritual. It is easy, now that the work is done and we are enjoying the fruits of it, to criticise the actions of Popes and priests, and to declaim against their excessive secularity; but had the Church never taken the temporal affairs of Europe in hand, civilised Europe would never have existed. The mediæval system, however, necessary as it was for the time, laid the Church open to the grossest abuse. Men entered the ecclesiastical order, not because they were drawn by love of Christ or of souls, but because to be a cleric was the easiest road to temporal preferment and wealth. With such men largely

in possession of the cure of souls, is it to be wondered at that souls were not cured or cared for? Bishops and priests, having obtained a see or a benefice, pocketed the revenues and left the souls of the people in charge of others, whilst they themselves spent their lives at Court or in travel. Popes and bishops there were who strove hard to remedy the evil, but their efforts were frustrated by others less scrupulous. In truth, the weakness as well as the strength of the mediæval Church belonged to the feudal system, nor could the weakness be radically remedied whilst the system remained, and when the system was in its decay no human power could prevent the growing corruption. If any Pope could have purified the ecclesiastical system of his time, it was Innocent III.—a man of foresight, adamant will, sensitive purity, and holy life. But the system was beyond the strength of Innocent III. As long as bishops, feudal lords, and the clerical order were the surest stepping-stone to political or civic honours, human nature could hardly be expected to resist the temptation, once the

idealism of the system had vanished. And yet what Pope would dare by a personal act to destroy a system which was the growth of centuries and still intimately bound up with social order? The office of Popes, as of all in authority, is to conserve rather than to destroy. Radical changes in the foundations of things can never be rightly initiated by authority; they must spring from society itself. Innocent had done all that Pope could do, and he left a memorial of his work in the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, which has been justly styled the great Reforming Council of the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> But, as we have said, the system was too strong for him. He could hardly do more than stem the tide; he could not turn it back.

Two forces, however, were at work to save the Church—the social revolution and the Friars. Innocent seems to have feared the revolution; he hesitated before he gave his approval to the Friars. Very pathetic, when we consider it, is the story how the Pope saw in a dream a

<sup>1</sup> Canon Knox-Little, *Life of St. Francis*, p. 193.

beggar man upholding the tottering walls of the Lateran Basilica, and how he recognised a little while afterwards in the poor man from Assisi the mendicant of his dreams.<sup>1</sup> Francis was indeed, under Providence, the destined saviour of mediæval Christendom. He was to accomplish what the Pope was already beginning to recognise as an almost impossible task.

Thus, then, did the Friars arrive upon the scene of European and English history at a most critical moment, when from the towns and universities a new spirit was spreading abroad, which was to end the Middle Ages and lay the foundations of modern history; and it is not without significance that they almost immediately, and as by the very instinct of their being, established themselves in town and university, and there, in the centres of the revolution, grappled with its problems and in no small measure shaped its destiny.

<sup>1</sup> *Legenda Trium Sociorum*, cap. xiii. Roman edition, 1899.

## II.

The history of the Franciscan Friars during the first two centuries and more of their existence is emphatically the history of Christendom. There was no movement of vital interest during that period in which they had no part. Theology, politics, art, and the social condition of the people all in some measure were touched by their influence.

But for centuries it has been the habit to disparage their work and character, and even at the present time, when the story of their founder is attracting the world's admiration, the Order which he founded is held up for pity or contempt as a veritable betrayal of his ideal. Francis, the simple mendicant of Assisi, content with a peasant's tunic and a cell of twigs and a crust of bread, to whom the crucifix was the only book, is painted in vivid colours against the dark background where friars crowd into well-built houses, attend the courts of kings,

and belong to the household of nobles, lecture in the universities, and hunt for legacies.

The picture thus presented is not only false in its sweeping denunciations, but it, moreover, manifests a lack of philosophical insight. Francis the individual is exalted at the expense of Francis the centre of a great world movement; for the Franciscan movement was something more than the inspiration of a single individual; it was an evolution of the Catholic spirit—the awakening of the Catholic consciousness to a vital aspect of Christian tradition hitherto but vaguely realised.

The failure to recognise this fact vitiates much of the work of those who have written “Lives” of St. Francis. They speak of the Saint as though he were something separate from his age and the centuries immediately preceding him. If they make any attempt to link Francis with the past, it is only to introduce the name of the Abbot Joachim of Calabria, the supposed author of the *Eternal Gospel*. The abbot is then regarded as the precursor of the Saint—a baptist crying aloud in the spiritual wilderness of the twelfth century.

Whereas, in fact, St. Francis and his Friars are the legitimate offspring of two historic forces—the new social spirit which was supplanting feudalism and the new spirit of piety which for a century past had seized hold of mediæval Christendom. Of this mediæval piety it will be needful to say something here in order to explain the inner spirit of the Franciscan movement. In treating of the twelfth century historians lay stress upon the worldliness which infected the Church of the period. Less emphasis is laid upon the other side of the picture, and the spiritual growth of the time is largely ignored; and yet behind the worldly glitter there was present a deep spiritual life. In those very cloisters to which the sectaries of the day pointed with contempt there was growing up more or less quietly a religious revolution, which was later on, in the person of St. Francis, to unite with the social revolution and save Christendom from its worldliness. The essential character of the new piety lay in its apprehension of the humanity of Christ as the revelation of His divinity and



as the type of all Christian life. Hence it came to be more and more recognised that no one is a true follower of Christ who does not imbibe His spirit and live after the fashion of His life upon earth. The true Christian is he who makes himself one with Christ in His humanity, bearing with Him the burden of humanity, and sharing in His redemptive work. Christ was to those mediæval souls truly their Leader and their Chieftain, and they gave Him that strong yet tender devotion which the people of the Middle Ages naturally gave the leader they followed in war or obeyed in peace. Christ entered into their lives as a Man amongst men, and found there a deep human worship. Yet they never forgot that He is God. They gazed tenderly upon His humanity, and felt His nearness to their own human nature; but in His humanity they saw revealed the eternal life of the Godhead. Unlike the Greek, who grew enraptured at the thought of the transcendental truths of Christianity, the mediæval mind loved to dwell upon the divine truth as manifested in the Incarnate Word. Very deep and tender

was their devotion, yet withal virile and simple. It was emphatically the worship of a Person by men themselves strong in personal character, and as such had something of the heroic quality. The Abbot Guarrie, preaching one Easter Day on the joy which the apostles must have felt at the news of Christ's resurrection, thus expresses what was the dominant note of this new piety: "Let everything else be lacking, it matters not to me if Jesus Christ be alive; let me, if it so please Him, be lacking to myself. It is enough so long as He is living, though He live but for Himself."<sup>1</sup>

What impressed them most in their contemplation of Christ was not His power and majesty, but His lowliness and humility. Power and majesty were His by nature. They took for granted that He their God must be almighty; but His condescension to our humble and weak estate was to them a revelation, in opposition to their natural prejudices. For the descendants of the Gothic warriors instinctively despised weakness and poverty, and they marvelled

<sup>1</sup> Guerrici Abbat, Sermo I. de Resurrect.

greatly when they began to realise that the all-powerful God chose humiliation as His earthly lot. To them this was the most incontestable proof of divine love. Once, however, they realised this truth, it came naturally to them, with their quick, generous souls, to seek to humiliate themselves for love of their Lord who had humbled Himself for them. They would not appear other than their liege Lord. If He suffered and was poor, they, too, must suffer and be poor; and as He, putting aside His omnipotence, came as the Friend and Lover of men, so must they love and minister. To realise in oneself, therefore, the humiliation of Christ became with these pious souls a veritable passion. "Christ humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death." These words might have been found graven on their hearts, so constantly were they in their minds. Hence, with St. Bernard, they held that the only sure way to eternal life was by the path of humility; and the word "humility" formed the dominant note in the harmony of their lives. Humility, however, with them meant the whole con-

descension of Christ in His earthly life. To be humble one had not merely to be lowly in one's own eyes—that was but the beginning of humility; but the humble man must be compassionate and loving towards his fellow-man, “so that his blessings become our blessings, and his evils our evils.” And yet more; the truly humble man is pure in heart, since all sin is a species of arrogance and self-sufficiency.<sup>1</sup>

Such, in brief, was that mediæval mysticism which renovated and saved the spiritual life of Christendom. It sought to follow closely in the footsteps of Christ upon earth in order to possess Him in eternity. Its motive power was personal love of the God-Man; its first and last utterance was “humility.” Of this spirit of piety St. Bernard was the chief prophetic interpreter, and St. Francis the supreme achievement.

“In Francis,” says Professor Harnack,<sup>2</sup> “mediæval piety obtained its clearest and most forcible expression. In him it uttered itself

<sup>1</sup> S. Bernardi, de Grad. Humilitatis III.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Dogma*, vol. vi. chap. 3 (English translation).

most simply, and, therefore, most powerfully and most impressively, because its chord—humility, love, and obedience—was here struck with the greatest purity, while the quality of tone which Francis lent to it was most melting.”

But in St. Francis this spirit of piety united itself with the new-world spirit which was now abroad, and which, as we have remarked, was as yet largely in opposition to the established order of things in Church and State. Francis was a child of the new democracy. His father was a merchant, and he belonged to Assisi, one of those small Italian republics in which the spirit of democratic freedom was most alive. In his early youth the Saint had shown his own sympathies and character in taking up arms with his fellow-citizens against the neighbouring feudal lords, who, aided by the rival city of Perugia, were bent on regaining their feudal privileges over Assisi. To the end of his days the same free, democratic spirit was evident in him. When he founded his Order he took the democratic form of government, as seen in the Italian republics, as the type on which to

organise his own society. He refused to listen to those who urged upon him the feudal form of government as already embodied in the old monastic Orders. Superiors were to be elected only for a definite period; they were forbidden to assume titles which implied an over-lordship, such as Abbot or Prior; they were to be simply ministers or guardians. Moreover, the absence of ceremonial and general simplicity of life, characteristic of the Franciscans, was in accord with the best traditions of the civic republics, though wealth very soon destroyed their traditions in this matter. And that marked individualism of spirit which is so characteristic of the Order undoubtedly had its origin in the new social spirit of the period. For the majority of the Friars, like St. Francis himself, were sprung from the commercial class.<sup>1</sup>

Now what gave St. Francis and his Friars their vast influence in the thirteenth century was just this fact: that in them the new-world spirit was wedded to the deepest religious spirit of the period—in them the two great forces which were

<sup>1</sup> Little, *Grey Friars in Oxford*, chap. vii.

stirring men's lives, but separately and apart and often in rivalry, were found united. They embodied in themselves all that was best, both in the world spirit and in the religious spirit of the time. It is such men who in all ages are the moral saviours of the world; for in them heaven and earth unite.

Thus in the history of the Friars two dominant notes naturally assert themselves, moulding the harmony of their life—the spirit of democratic freedom and that fervent devotion to the Person of the earthly Christ as the rule of their life, which they derive from the Catholic spirit of the Middle Ages; and wherever you get these two notes in harmony there you have the essential Franciscan spirit.

### III.

It would, then, be altogether misleading to describe the Franciscan life by any mere external programme, as is frequently done. The Franciscan life can no more be set down in

terms of speech than can Christianity itself. It escapes words, and can only be embodied in a living tradition. If, as is commonly the case, we sum up the ideal of the Order in the word "Poverty," we leave unexpressed other aspects, such as simplicity of soul and love of one's neighbour and joyousness, all which enter into the ideal of the Franciscan life quite as much as poverty.

In truth, Franciscan poverty is but the symbol or sacramental sign of that many-sided life which is included in the following of Christ in His redemptive mission to men. And in this it differs essentially from the programme of poverty proclaimed by the sectaries of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These sectaries—Waldenses, Cathari, and others—rose up as a protest against the existing evils in the Church. Irritated by the worldliness of the clergy and their greed for temporalities rather than for souls, and indignant at the general laxity of the times, they proclaimed a crusade in favour of the primitive simplicity and poverty of the early Christian ages. They demanded



the abolition of all temporalities—would have had bishops and abbots resign their feudal dignities and the lower clergy their benefices. Priests were to live simply by the alms of the laity, whilst the wealth of the Church was to be distributed to the poor. Wherever they came these sectaries were the terror of the peace-loving population. They called on the civil authorities to cleanse the Church of her corruptions, and when the civil authorities refused to do their will, they denounced these in turn. Nothing could be more unlike the mode of action of the Friars, yet with both the one and the other the war-cry was Apostolic Poverty. But with the Friars poverty represented primarily a personal conversion to Christ; with the sectaries it was a political programme. As Luthardt, speaking of the Waldenses, admits: "Their whole way of thinking led to their viewing the Scriptures as a legal prescription of the external conduct of life."<sup>1</sup> Their conception of Christianity was wanting in spiritual substance; to them the Gospel was but a legal code. They

<sup>1</sup> *History of Christian Ethics*, vol. i p. 384.

did not realise that without an inner spiritual life an external code of morals is of little value, and is apt to make men hypocritical rather than virtuous. Hence the endeavour of Pope Innocent III., to bring them within the pale of the Church and utilise their enthusiasm for the reformation of Christian society, failed; for their tone of mind was Judaistic rather than Christian, legal rather than spiritual.

But with the Friars it was different. Their view was eminently spiritual. They embraced poverty because Christ was poor, and because in the renunciation of temporal possessions they found freedom to adhere to Christ in spirit and in truth. They did not set themselves in the first place to reform society. If they became afterwards great social reformers, that was as a consequence of their vocation, not as a conscious motive. The Friar kneeling before the altar and taking his vow of absolute poverty thought not of his neighbour's worldliness, but of his own; he renounced himself that he might be all for Christ, and he considered it a high privilege to be thus admitted into closer intimacy with

his Lord. Hence, again, his attitude towards the abuses in the Church was wholly different from that of the sectaries. The Friar pitied where the sectary judged. "Let no Friar," wrote St. Francis in his Rule, "judge those who live delicately or are dressed in soft and fine garments." It was not so much the external abuses as the want of the inner spirit of the Gospel, of personal attachment to Christ, which went home to the Friars. Bring back the spiritual life, and external conduct will right itself—such was the Franciscan idea. The Franciscan regarded the world as spiritually sick, and sorrowed for it accordingly.

A similar difference marked off the Friar from the sectary in the attitude of each towards the Church. To the one the toleration by the Church of avaricious priests and the wealthy laity was an affront to their personal convictions. The Church must be sinful if she tolerated sinners. But the Friar regarded the Church always as the *Sponsa Christi*—the Spouse of Christ, and His other Self, whose duty it was to bear with sinners in order to save them eventually.

Another difference between the Friars and the sectaries was that the Friar was of a joyous disposition—bright, and inclined to merriment ; whereas the sectary was generally of a gloomy, laughter-lacking spirit. And this came from the fact that in his poverty the Friar found spiritual freedom, whereas his programme of poverty bound the sectary in legal fetters ; and laughter is only for the free.

Most necessary, then, is it to recognise the essentially spiritual nature of Franciscan poverty if one is to judge rightly of the Friars. It was nothing less than the endeavour of the newly-awakened, freedom-loving spirit of the thirteenth century to walk as closely as it might in the footsteps of the Incarnate God, taking His life as the model of its life, conforming itself to Him in mind and act, seeking thereby to obtain spiritual possession of Him even here upon the earth.

To learn how this holy ambition was realised in the life of St. Francis himself one has only to read his history. Having stripped himself of all earthly possession for the sake of con-

forming himself to Christ, he became so intimately one with Him in spirit as truly to live over again in his own consciousness the sacred drama of the Gospel. With Christ he lived, worked, and suffered, so that men, gazing upon him, have thought him a most perfect image of his Lord. The Stigmata which adorned his body were but the seal put upon the absorption of his spirit into the suffering life of Christ on earth. Apart from this sacred conformity of mind and action, his poverty meant nothing; but as the symbol and outward expression of the spiritual ideal it regenerated Christendom. It brought men nearer to Christ and made them more conscious of His Presence, and so rescued religion from the barren formalism into which it was falling.

The same spirit which animated St. Francis in a supereminent degree also animated his Friars. By their lives and preaching they seemed to make Christ live again on earth in the imagination of the people, and brought home even to the rudest minds an apprehension of the Gospel and its mysteries.

And here we may notice how the Apostolic form of life came naturally to the Friars from the very nature of the ideal proposed to them. For the Friar must follow Christ in all the condescension of His earthly life, and as Christ, leaving house and home, went forth to preach to the multitudes, so must he. Not only must he take to himself in a relative sense those words of the Prophet which describe the humiliation of Christ: "He is despised and the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity," but he must further receive as the rule of his life that other passage: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." For compassion and love, as we have seen, entered into the humility of Christ.

But the Franciscan Apostolate had a character all its own. If one might venture the distinction, it was not so much with the idea of defending the Faith that the Franciscan went

forth to preach, but rather out of a personal regard for the souls of men. And in this the Friars of St. Francis differed from the disciples of St. Dominic. I do not mean, of course, that the Dominicans were not moved by a love of souls, or that the Franciscans did not defend the Faith; but that, whereas the one was primarily sent to maintain the purity of Catholic dogma against the intellectual errors of the day, the primary object of the other was to win souls themselves. Hence the Franciscan was not merely a preacher, he was much more—a worker ready for the sake of souls to take up any work of mercy, whether spiritual or corporal. With Christ he not only preached forgiveness of sin, but fed the hungry multitude; he gave them words of eternal life and helped them in their temporal needs. The sick and sorrowing found in him their friend, even as did the sinner. And in all his work there was an informality and simplicity which won the hearts of the people and made them feel that the Friar was a man amongst men—one who was shut off from them by no institutional barriers, but was one of themselves.

This leads us to another point in the character and life of the Friars, which is of utmost importance to note—the difference, namely, between a Friar and a Monk. The Franciscan Friar, it has been said, “represents the religious individualism of the West.” We have seen how the Order sprang out of the two great tendencies of the twelfth century, both strongly individualistic in character—the new social spirit and mediæval mysticism. The Monk, on the other hand, was the result of quite a distinct movement. Monasticism in the West, in as far as it took permanent form, represents the political and social conception of Christian life. The natural life of the Monks showed itself in their work. They brought the wild and lawless nature of the new nations who displaced the old Empire into obedience to law; they taught Ostrogoth and Visigoth, Frank and Anglo-Saxon the arts of civilisation, and, in a word, formed Christian society. The monastery was itself a type of well-ordered, civilised life; and the Monk an embodiment of authority and law, both in matters spiritual and temporal. Not



that individualism of character was lacking in the monastery. The more perfect any society is, the more evident will appear that natural individualism which is inherent in every soul. But the Monk as Monk represented law and order. His chief duty, therefore, was to contribute to the well-ordered life of his monastery. Before all else he must chant the Divine Praises in common with his brethren; his next duty was to labour for the spiritual and temporal welfare of his community. It was through the organised action of the monastic society that the individual Monk, generally speaking, acted upon the world at large.<sup>1</sup>

It was to be otherwise with the Friar. His action upon the world at large was essentially individual and personal. The Friar going forth into the world did not carry a monastery with him, so to speak, as did the Monk. The friary is not a Friar's world in the sense in which the monastery is the Monk's; it is his retreat whither he retires to pray and rest as Christ

<sup>1</sup> See Abbot Gasquet's *Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries* (Introduction).

retired into the hills. But his world is wherever there are souls to be saved or hearts to be comforted.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that in a friary there should be no order or organisation. Wherever any body of men gather together for a specific purpose, organisation becomes a necessity and laws will find a legitimate place. But with the Friars the dominant idea was to reproduce individually and personally the earthly life of Christ, and the organisation had to respect this ideal and foster that individualism of character which the ideal implies ; otherwise the ideal itself would be destroyed. The common life of the Friars, therefore, differs radically from the common life of the Monk in the object at which it aims. In the one case the object aimed at is a perfect community, in the other a perfect individual. For whilst, as has been said, the Monk acts upon the world

<sup>1</sup> Very beautifully is this expressed in the Constitutions of the Capuchins : *Et ne aliis prædicantes ipsi reprobi efficiantur, dimittant nonnumquam populorum frequentiam et ad solitudinem redeant et cum dulcissimo Salvatore montem ascendant sanctæ orationis et contemplationis, ibique tamdiu maneat, quoadusque Deo pleni, denuo Spiritus sancti impetus eos ad divinas in mundum gratias effundendas moveat.* Cap. ix. 19.

indirectly through his monastery, the proper action of the Friar is directly personal. His influence is derived immediately from his personal conformity to the ideal of his Order. Hence one of the marks of the genuine Franciscan community is simplicity of external life and comparative absence of ceremonial. Organisation and ceremonial of some sort there must be, but it must be of the simplest character, so as to foster and not destroy the essential individualism of the Order; since the Friar's influence depends upon personality rather than upon organisation.

#### IV.

We come now to speak of the life of the Friars as it was manifested to the world, and of its secular development.

It has already been pointed out how many writers on St. Francis have failed to grasp the world-character of the religious movement which centres in his personality. To them the Saint

is merely an individual in the midst of a world which is strange to him, instead of the chief character in a world-drama. But they not only misinterpret his relation to the past; they fail to understand his position in regard to the future and to the Friars who came after him. These, too, like St. Francis, were born of the forces which in civil and religious life were re-making the mediæval world. In them, though less clearly perhaps and less heroically, these world-forces were combined. The Friar is not merely an imitator of the *Poverello* of Assisi, but one who shares in the same spirit with him and with him interprets it to the multitude; and they have the liberty of the spirit. Bound by the same principles of life and conduct, they yet are free to apply these principles beyond the more narrow sphere of experience within which the Saint necessarily lived. We cannot easily imagine St. Francis lecturing in a university; neither can we imagine the Friars spread throughout the earth, living permanently in cells of twigs. And yet Francis had, unconsciously to himself, a message for the university;

and the cell of twigs is not without practical significance to the Friars. It is the same with the Saint of Assisi as with all men who embody in themselves an ideal which is to vivify the world. They are in some degree set apart from the multitude; the light set upon the hill to attract men upwards. But the ideal itself must descend into the earth if it is to elevate the earth, and in the process much that was beautiful in the pure ideal will be lost to sight. The ideal will make itself felt as an underlying influence more often than as a clear and visible fact. Only here and there will it show itself without alloy, convincing men of its presence; and even then its separate appearances will have something individual and distinct, according to the circumstances of time and place.

In St. Francis and his first disciples the Franciscan ideal was manifested in its purest form, and they therefore are the supreme type and standard of Franciscan life. We will, then, glance at the type before we come to speak of its developments.

The Friars Minor date their institution from

the year 1209, when Francis the son of a rich merchant of Assisi, having already renounced his inheritance for the love of Christ and made himself the poorest of the poor, gathered around him several companions. These men, like himself, had been men of wealth, but now "sold all that they had and gave it to the poor," and themselves became poor. For three years previously Francis had been living a life of poverty, working with his hands and begging his bread. He had run the gauntlet of ridicule, and now by sheer force of character and evident sincerity was winning the respect of his fellow-citizens. He was still an enigma to them. If, said some, he wanted to leave the world, why not join some monastic Order? But he replied that he did not want to be a Monk, but only to serve Christ in poverty. So they wondered and did not understand. In truth Francis hardly yet understood himself, he hardly realised his own vocation. He was following faithfully the path marked out for him by the divine leading, but whither it was leading him he did not yet know; nor was he impatient to know. Sufficient

for him that he was following Christ in the freedom of his soul.

But early in the spring of 1209 he was one day hearing Mass, when the words of the Gospel struck him as an admonition directed to himself: "And going, preach, saying: The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely have ye received, freely give. Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff; for the workman is worthy of his meat."<sup>1</sup> He immediately began to admonish people whom he met that they should love God and save their souls. His words were simple and homely, the utterances of a man untrained by art, but who realised the truths he spoke. Within a few weeks Francis was no longer alone, for he had gained his first disciples. Once again he went to hear Mass in order to consult the Gospels, and opening the book he read these words:<sup>2</sup> "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 7-10.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xix. 21; Luke ix. 2, 23, 24.

have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me . . . and He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick . . . and Jesus said to His disciples: If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it." In these words Francis and his companions recognised their rule of life. They were to be poor and without earthly possessions; they were to go about preaching the Gospel and taking care of the sick. It is characteristic of St. Francis and the Franciscan movement, that these first Friars at this time drew up no constitutions or statutes for a new Order. The words of the Gospel were enough, and they acted spontaneously upon them.

Then occurred a singular phenomenon in the history of Umbria. The companions of St. Francis gathered together the poor and distributed all their wealth, reserving nothing to themselves. Next they clothed themselves in the rude garb of the peasantry and took their



place in society amongst the very poor, the *minores* or lower class. Whence afterward they came to be known as the *Fratres Minores* or *Friars Minor*.

The actual life they led at this period has been well described by M. Sabatier, in one of the happiest passages of his *Vie de S. Francois*.<sup>1</sup>

“The first brothers lived as did the poor people among whom they so willingly moved; Portiuncula was their favourite church, but it would be a mistake to suppose that they sojourned there for any long period. It was their place of meeting, nothing more. When they set forth they simply knew that they should meet again in the neighbourhood of the modest chapel. Their life was that of the Umbrian beggars of the present day, going here and there as fancy dictated, sleeping in haylofts, in leper hospitals or under the porch of some church. So little had they any fixed abode that Egidio, having decided to join them, was at considerable trouble to learn where to find Francis, and accidentally meeting him in the

<sup>1</sup> Chap. v. p. 77, English translation.

neighbourhood of Rivo-Torto, he saw in the fact a providential leading. They went up and down the country, joyfully sowing their seed. It was the beginning of summer, the time when everybody in Umbria is out of doors mowing or turning the grass. The customs of the country have changed but little. Walking in the end of May in the fields about Florence, Perugia, or Rieti, one still sees at nightfall the bagpipers entering the fields as the mowers seat themselves upon the haystacks for their evening meal. They play a few pieces and then the train of haymakers return, to the village, followed by the harvest-laden carts. It is they who lead the procession, rending the air with their sharpest strains. The joyous Penitents who loved to call themselves *Joculatores Domini*, God's *jongleurs*, no doubt often did the same. They did even better, for not willing to be a charge to anyone, they passed a part of the day in aiding the peasants in their field-work. The inhabitants of these districts are for the most part kindly and sedate. The Friars soon gained their confidence by relating to them

first their history and then their hopes. They worked and ate together, field-hands and Friars often slept in the same barn, and when with the morrow's dawn the Friars went on their way, the hearts of those they left behind had been touched. They were not yet converted, but they knew that not far away over towards Assisi were living men who had renounced all worldly goods, and who, consumed with zeal, were going up and down preaching penitence and peace."

This picture is substantially true to fact. The first Friars could hardly be said to have any proper dwelling. Rivo-Torto and the Portiuncula were their meeting-places when they returned from their journeys. To their fervent spirits the entire earth was their home, and they went hither and thither, admonishing men and women whom they met by the way with loving simplicity: "Love God and fear Him, and do worthy penance for your sins," for as yet they had not begun to preach publicly.<sup>1</sup> The full account left us of those early days in

<sup>1</sup> Fioretti, *Life of Fra Egidio*, chap. i.

the *Legend of the Three Companions* leaves us in no doubt as to the primordial type of the Franciscan life. We are told how the people wondered much when they saw these men "so different from others in their life and dress, and, as it were, country folk;" and how when travelling abroad they came into villages and towns, they were oftentimes taken for fools and knaves and treated accordingly.

"Some threw mud at them, others put dice into their hands and invited them to play; and others again would seize them by their hoods and, taking them on their backs, would carry them about. Moreover, they suffered many tribulations and hardships from hunger and thirst, cold, and want of clothing. All which they sustained with fortitude as they had learned from St. Francis; nor were they saddened or perturbed in mind, nor did they wish evil to those who treated them thus evilly; but they rejoiced greatly in the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

What puzzled the people was that these men, utterly without resources, would not receive

<sup>1</sup> *Tres Socii*, cap. x.

money, and that, however badly they were treated, they were always cheerful and happy. So that after awhile the more thoughtful were filled with admiration, and came to apologise for their former rudeness and discourtesy.<sup>1</sup> Three qualities of soul are especially apparent in these early Franciscans—contempt for any sort of earthly possession, a constant joyousness in the midst of want and suffering, and a great love for each other. “They loved each other,” write the Three Companions, “with deep affection, and each served and cherished the other, even as a mother serves and loves an only well-beloved child. Indeed, so great was the charity which burned in them that it would have seemed a light thing for them to deliver their body to death, not only for the love of Christ, but for the welfare of the souls, nay, even of the bodies, of their brethren.” They go on to relate how, in fact, when two of the brethren were out one day, one brother protected the other with his own body against the stones with which some poor fool began to pelt them.

<sup>1</sup> *Tres Socii*, cap. xi.

“Thus,” they continue, “were they ready to give their lives one for the other.” As they had given away all their goods, they depended chiefly upon alms. But they preferred to work for their bread when they could, and refused to receive alms except to supply their actual needs, “lest they should be robbers of other poor.”<sup>1</sup> Nay, they would even give away the alms they had received if they met other poor men in want; for they were, according to their profession, to be the poorest of the poor. So complete was their renunciation of earthly possessions that even in regard to the necessities of life, if others were in need, these were to be supplied first, and were to be considered as having a prior right even to the alms given to the brethren. “For they were so truly poor,” says the Legend, “that out of the things offered them for the love of God, they themselves gave freely and generously, parting with the alms which were given them, that the Gospel might be fulfilled: ‘Give to everyone who asks of thee.’”<sup>2</sup> But whilst they took sparingly of the

<sup>1</sup> *Testament of St. Francis*; also Fioretti, *Life of Fra Egidio*, chap. iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Tres Socii*, cap. xi.

alms offered them, they gave freely and generously what alone they themselves possessed—the Spirit of God; welcoming all who came to them, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, and endeavouring to turn them away from sin and lead them back to God by penance.

Here, then, we have a well-defined type. These first Friars strip themselves of earthly riches and comforts; earn their bread when they can and beg it when they are unable to earn it; cheerfully they ask for the love of God, what for God's sake they cheerfully part with to a fellow-mendicant. They take almost literally as an injunction to themselves the words of Christ: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." They are not hermits living apart from the crowd of men; they go amongst the people as men of the people, sharing their life, and, by fervent, homely words, striving to lead their thoughts to eternal things. They wear the dress of the peasant, and consider themselves the least of men and the servants of all in need. But they are especially solicitous

to tend the lepers and minister to the outcasts from society.

In a very few years the small family of Friars which used to meet at Portiuncula had grown into a multitude, and it became necessary to draw out a written Rule. Hitherto the mere words of the Gospel had been the only rule, and the personality of St. Francis was sufficient interpretation. This was now no longer possible. Scattered throughout Italy and already beginning to establish themselves in the neighbouring countries, the Friars needed the written word to show them what manner of men they should be. Moreover, the Saint now desired to have the approbation of the Holy See for his manner of life, and it was necessary, therefore, to declare plainly on what principles he wished his brethren to live. Thus the Rule came to be written. In it we find the same type as revealed in the history of the first years, but with certain modifications rendered necessary by the sudden growth of the Order. The Friars are already living in fixed places under the direction of superiors ; yet even so they did not



consider themselves bound to community life as were the monks. For the Rule supposed that some at least of the brethren are dwelling in the houses of people whom they serve, and a special law regulates their conduct there. They are not to be "keepers of the chamber nor cellarers, nor overseers, nor to undertake any employment which might cause scandal or be injurious to their souls; but they are to be inferior and subject to all who are in the said house."<sup>1</sup> And "wheresoever the brethren dwell, they shall frequently visit one another"; at the same time some of the brethren were set apart for public preaching, though all are to preach by their works. These specially appointed preachers "whether they be clerics or lay brothers" are told to humble themselves in all things nor inwardly exalt themselves for any good which God may sometimes say or do by them." They are to shun the wisdom of the world, for "the Spirit of the world cares much for words but little for works, and it seeks not religion and sanctity of heart, but a religion

<sup>1</sup> Rule of A.D. 1221, chap. vii.

and sanctity which may appear before men." In other words, even the public preachers are to abide by the essential simplicity and sincerity which characterised the informal preaching of the first Friars.

As regards work and the seeking for alms the Rule declares: "Let all the brethren who know how to work labour and exercise themselves in the art they understand, provided it be not unbecoming nor contrary to the salvation of their souls. For the Prophet says: 'For because thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee.' And the Apostle says: 'If any man will not work, neither let him eat.' Let everyone, therefore, keep steadfast to the art or trade in which he is skilled; and in payment for their work they may receive whatever is necessary for them, but not money. And if they be in want, let them ask alms like other poor. They may have the tools and instruments required for their work. . . . Let all the servants of God always persevere in prayer or in some other profitable labour." In this passage we get a

complete expression of St. Francis' mind concerning the morality of mendicancy. His Friars were to work, and were to ask for alms only "when the wages of their labour are not given them."<sup>1</sup>

But in this case they were not to be ashamed to beg. They were "to rejoice when they are in company with persons who are mean and despised by the world, with the poor and the weak, with the infirm and the lepers, and with those who beg in the streets. And whenever it is necessary they shall go asking alms, and let them not be ashamed, but remember that our Lord Jesus Christ . . . became poor, and a stranger, and lived on alms together with the Blessed Virgin and His disciples." Nor had the Friar any occasion to be ashamed, since he was freely to give as he received. The alms he accepted were to be in place of the wages which were not given him. But they were never to receive money, lest they be tempted to make a treasure for themselves here on earth. It was of the essence of their life that they

<sup>1</sup> *Testament of St. Francis.*

should depend day by day upon the Providence of God for whatever was necessary for them. Only in one case did St. Francis allow them to take money, and that was when they had to provide for the sick brethren and the lepers. In this case the law of charity supervened; but they were to be very wary, "lest their hearts be turned towards greed."<sup>1</sup>

One other point to be noted about this Rule is that St. Francis enjoined upon the brethren neither the monastic breviary nor the monastic fasts. The brethren who were clerics were to say the Divine Office according to the rite of the secular clergy.<sup>2</sup> The fasts enjoined were substantially those observed by the pious faithful of the time: the lent of St. Martin, which however began with the Friars on November 2nd; the Epiphany lent, and that beginning with Ash-Wednesday.

In 1223 the Friars were given a shorter Rule, which received the approbation of Pope

<sup>1</sup> Rule of 1221, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> They were, of course, supposed to say it chorally when possible, as this is the proper mode of reciting the Divine Office.

Honorius III. This "Second Rule (as it is sometimes termed) is the same in principle as the former. One new precept, however, was introduced into this new Rule, which has given rise to no little controversy. "Let the brethren," it says, "who cannot read be not anxious to learn, but rather let them seek to have the spirit of the Lord."

Now the Rule is a clear reflection in words of the essential life of the Saint and his earliest companions. But it contemplates a widespread society, and not a small family, and it is evident that St. Francis had already begun to perceive certain dangers ahead. Indeed, a strong party already existed amongst the multitude of Friars who did not really grasp the Saint's ideal, and who were Franciscan chiefly by the accident of the garb they wore. Under Elias and Gregory of Naples they had nearly wrecked the Order during the Saint's absence in Syria in 1220, and the last years of his life were embittered by the troubles they created. It was chiefly to protect his ideal against these false brethren that the Rule was written, and it

marks definitely the passing of the Franciscan movement out of the region of the pure ideal into the storm and stress of the world's actual life. Henceforth the Friar's mission was no longer to be limited by the idyllic conditions of Umbria, but was to be as broad as Christendom, and to make itself felt in every department of Christian life.

## V.

Very interesting would it be to trace the progress of the movement through all the vicissitudes of its history. Nowhere is the perpetual conflict between a divine ideal and fallen human nature more vividly portrayed than in the story of the Friars. There one can see the incessant struggle between the vital forces of spirituality and worldliness which marks the progress of every great religious movement. At one time the ideal triumphs and at another it is thrown back; now it is the spirit of worldly prudence and relaxation which

seems to prevail, and again it is the heroic simplicity and fervour of St. Francis. It is a veritable drama; sometimes a tragedy, sometimes a comedy. In this essay we can but touch upon some of the determining points in the history of the movement.

We find, then, within a very few years after the promulgation of the Rule ~~that a change has~~ come over the face of the Franciscan family. The Friars no longer live in abandoned churches or rude huts, but in convents<sup>1</sup> especially built for their use. They still in some measure earn their bread by manual labour, but the number of public preachers has increased, and in consequence they depend largely upon the alms of the people. Gradually, too, the conventual form of life displaces the earlier system of living here and there, some in hermitages and others in the houses of those they served; and in the eyes of the people, at least, the Friars have something of the character of Monks. More remarkable still, they take to study, and invade

<sup>1</sup> A "convent" designates properly any house in which a community dwells, whether of men or women.

the universities and occupy theological chairs, and even take to natural science. Here we have a development which at first sight looks much like a corruption. In truth, however, the development was natural, and sprang out of the very nature of the movement, though it undoubtedly gave scope to abuses, and in the eyes of the multitude seemed to justify them. But as long as the world is the world corruptions will always nestle in the very bosom of genuine development and be a source of confusion and scandal: nevertheless an idea to live must develop.

As we have said, the development was determined by the very nature of things. St. Francis himself had welcomed into his society all sorts and conditions of men. The only demand he made upon them was that they repent of their sins and be willing to follow Christ by the path of poverty. At once a definite organisation, more elaborate as the movement spread, became necessary; otherwise such a multitude would have been a danger to society, and might easily have become a fanatical horde or sect at war



with Church and State, as were so many of the reforming movements of the time. Or at best the movement would have fizzled out in ineffective individual enthusiasms. Moreover, that the new organisation should come under the direct control of the Church and assume an ecclesiastical character was to be expected. One need but study the history of the time to see how necessary the control of the Church was to guide the new enthusiasm and turn it into a practical direction. Under such control the Cathari, the Waldenses, and other bodies might have effected much good in the world, instead of becoming, as they did, mere factions at war with all recognised authority. Francis, moreover, was too true a Catholic and too big a man ever to separate himself from the Church even in thought, and once he had determined to gather together companions and preach the Gospel, it came naturally to him to seek ecclesiastical sanction. Again, once the Friars were an organised society, they had to become part of the ecclesiastical institution or else a mere dissenting sect. No middle course was practical.

Further, it would have been quite out of the question for a multitude of Friars, separated from the ordinary life of the world, to continue without permanent dwellings, and be quartered upon other people. One has but to put the situation into words to realise its absurdity. And if in time the Friars came to live less by manual labour and more in dependence on alms, this development is justified by the fact that they gave themselves more generously to public works, both spiritual and corporal, for which they got no direct payment. Finally, once St. Francis determined to send forth his brethren to preach, the necessity for theological study might have been foretold. In the first enthusiasm created by the movement the people drank in every word uttered by the Friars, and the Friars themselves, exalted in spirit by the highly spiritual atmosphere surrounding their founder, could draw upon that spiritual vision ever present to their souls for the instruction they imparted. At intense moments in human life the simplest words suffice to reveal the inmost spirit of men. It is otherwise when

they return to a more normal condition of mind. Then they require to be convinced by visible facts or arguments. The preacher who in the midst of a religious revival is listened to with rapture will oftentimes fail once the enthusiasm has passed. Nor does the enthusiasm depend altogether upon the preacher himself, but springs from the presence of an awakening religious sense of which he is the spokesman. Therefore, however repugnant it may have been to St. Francis' own feeling, study became a necessity to the Friars if they were to fulfil faithfully the mission he imposed upon them.

But whilst circumstances forced the Friars to depart in certain external details from the manner of life of the first brethren, yet we find, especially during the first three centuries, when the development was most acute, a constant attempt to reproduce the original type in all its ideal simplicity, as far as it was possible in changed conditions of time and place; and this constant reversion is the best proof of the genuineness of development within the Order. Every fresh inroad of the spirit of relaxation

was met by an attempt to revive the first simplicity and original poverty. A notable illustration of this fact is found in the Capuchin reform in the sixteenth century. In the Constitutions of this reform we find the Friars not only forbidden to hold property of any kind, but they are further forbidden to make any large provision against temporal wants. They are told to "remember that their heavenly Father knows how, and is able and willing, to provide for them. They are not therefore like the heathen who do not believe in Divine Providence, with much care and anxiety to procure for themselves the things of this world which God bestows with bounteous hand, even upon the brute creature; but as the true sons of the Eternal Father, laying aside all solicitude, they shall in all things depend on the Divine liberality and abandon themselves entirely to His infinite goodness."<sup>1</sup> Wherefore they were to make no provision of the necessities of life which could be obtained daily, excepting in special cases. And since Franciscan poverty is with difficulty observed in large communities,

<sup>1</sup> *Constitutiones Capucc.*, cap. vi.

The Capuchin reform, however, was not alone in its endeavour to secure a true development ; it was but the last of many reforms which mark the history of the Order, all of which are characterised by the same tendency to revert to the original type. But these reforms, directed as they were against existing abuses within the Order, and taking their origin in an age far removed in temper and outlook from the age of St. Francis himself, naturally import something into their Constitutions and immediate mode of life which belongs only to a passing period. They show us the Franciscan ideal working in a certain period, facing certain particular dangers, and subject to certain urgent demands. The permanent and essential element, however, in all these reforms is their turning towards the original type. Sometimes gazing upon it from afar, sometimes drawing very near to it, they bear the mark of true development which always looks to the primitive type as its standard and inspiration.

On the other hand, the spirit of relaxation always looked away from the original type, and

adopted a standard foreign to the Franciscan spirit. Even where the true development seems to approach nearest to relaxation this difference is visible, that the one keeps in mind the early foundation, and tends towards it, whilst the other leads away from it.

And here we may note some of the dominant characteristics which throughout the history of the Order have clung to the party of relaxation. In the first place, decline seems ever to have begun with the building of large churches and houses, and the gathering together of large communities in opposition to the mind of St. Francis, who, as the author of the *Speculum Perfectionis* says, "wished that the brethren should not live together in great number, because it seemed to him difficult for a multitude to observe poverty."<sup>1</sup> One of the first symptoms of relaxation in the Saint's own lifetime was the building of a large house at Bologna, and to the fervent disciples of the early days, Elias' iniquities culminated in the building of the great convent and basilica of Assisi. Certainly

<sup>1</sup> ii. 10.

the Saint's presentiment was justified by facts. Large houses and communities have ever been the centres of decline in the Order.

With the large houses went the tendency towards the older monastic ideal. External observances were multiplied, and life in the large communities became almost as ceremonious as in the ancient abbeys. Noteworthy it surely is that the false brethren who would have induced St. Francis to lower his standard of poverty wanted to introduce into the Order certain fasts and vigils observed by the Monks, but to which the Saint would not oblige the brethren. In a word, they went in chiefly for externals, and sought to stand well with the people by impressing them with an austere formalism. In keeping with this spirit was the rebuke which Elias gave St. Francis when the Saint, on his dying bed, broke into song. "It is not fitting," urged Elias, "that a man reputed holy by the people should sing thus merrily when dying, for the people will be disedified."<sup>1</sup>

Next the relaxed Friars began to receive

<sup>1</sup> *Spec. Perfect.*, xiii. 1.

legacies and bequests in order to support their large communities, and so gave ground for the charge preferred against the Friars by the political satirists, that they haunted the death-beds of the rich in the hope of gifts to come. Exaggerated as the charge was, there was yet sufficient truth in it to induce the Capuchins to make a special Constitution forbidding the Friars of that reform to allow dying people whom they attended to leave them legacies.

Another note of the decline was the anxiety to ~~increase in numbers~~. Manifestly, St. Francis himself did not wish his Order to be exclusive; he would have his Friars receive anyone, whether rich or poor, learned or ignorant, and even the sinner if he were repentant. But the Friars of the relaxation went farther. They persuaded young boys to join the Order, and laid penitents under an obligation not to enter other Orders,<sup>1</sup> so that the Order was swelled by a multitude who had no true vocation.

Finally—and this is an important fact in view of the frequent ~~assertion~~ that learning

<sup>1</sup> Eccleston, xiii. ; Little, *Grey Friars in Oxford*, chap. vi.



and the Franciscan life are incongruous—the spirit of relaxation is generally marked by a decline in mental achievement. The best and most original thought has been developed, not amongst the Friars of the relaxation, but amongst those who were fervent and loyal to St. Francis' ideal. With their decline from this, the Friars have lost their freshness of mind and the peculiar directness of thought, which, as we shall see, is the property of the Franciscan school, and they have become mere academicians and sophists when they have not been merely ignorant. On the other hand, the reforms have again produced active and original thought. But of this later on.

How far the spirit of relaxation prevailed in the Order it is difficult to say. A noisy minority will ever be more in evidence than a calm majority; and the more spiritual brethren were naturally of a less violent and more retiring disposition than the others. But it is evident that at the death of St. Francis a large proportion of the brethren were in favour of Elias and relaxation, and this was so, too, for

many years. Nor need we be surprised at this in a society depending for its vitality, not so much upon external activities, which are easily regulated, as upon a certain spiritual ideal, too high and sublime to be easily attained. Amongst no men is the letter more inadequate to express the spirit than amongst the Franciscans. The essence of their life consists in soaring aspiration after an ideal never altogether apprehended upon this earth. The Franciscan who ceases to aspire ceases to be Franciscan. Such an Order is more apt than others to be subject to relaxations, and reforms are, one might say, a natural condition of its existence.

At first, and for many years, the relaxed and the fervent brethren formed one family, and though distinct in character, were yet bound by the same external organisation, so that in one province or house the party of relaxation and that of reform existed side by side, and the general temper of the community would depend upon the numbers or strength of either party. Later on the more fervent Friars were allowed by the Holy See to withdraw from the society

of the relaxed, and to form separate local communities, though the superior organisation remained the same for both parties, and both were under the government of the same Provincial and General Ministers. Finally, however, early in the sixteenth century, the communities which held revenues were altogether separated from those who refused them, and thus the two distinct congregations of the Conventuals and Observants were created. The Observants included all the Friars who rejected revenues; but even here there were different degrees of reform, some communities approaching nearer to the original type than others.<sup>1</sup> Finally, in 1525, the Capuchin reform was begun, which was the last great reform of the Order, and that which approached nearest in its conception to the original type. This reform was constituted into a separate congregation; and thus to-day there remain three distinct congregations of Franciscans, bearing witness to the long struggle between relaxation and fidelity, and testifying

<sup>1</sup> Within the last few years Leo XIII. has given the different reforms of the Observants a uniform Constitution.

to the presence of a true development within the Order. For much as these reforms endeavoured to reproduce the original type, still circumstances constantly forced them to modify and change, to enlarge their external activities, and here and there encroach upon the individual liberty found in the early days. Changes of this sort in external organisation are to be expected in any society which lives on from age to age. What the world, however, has a right to demand is that the society shall be true to the essential principles of its institution, and this in larger or lesser degree the Franciscan Order on the whole may claim to have been, notwithstanding the temporary triumphs of the spirit of relaxation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since the division of the Order into distinct congregations, the reformed congregations have always had a majority of Friars, which gives good reason for supposing that even before the division the fervent outnumbered the relaxed.

## VI.

But for the right understanding of the history of the Friars it is necessary to determine more exactly the mind of St. Francis regarding the two most notable features of their external life—poverty and learning; for it is concerning these two subjects that most misconception seems to have arisen in the minds of the critics.

Now, as regards poverty, the fundamental law was that the Friars were to be poor men, sharing the poverty of the multitude, thus imitating Christ who became as one of the least of men. The application of this principle by St. Francis, especially as regards the use of money, the dwellings of the brethren, and their garments, was undoubtedly measured by the external conditions of the poor in his own day; but it was no part of his mission to stereotype the economic conditions of the mediæval peasantry. Whether the mediæval peasant wore woollen clothes or linen, took his

wages in coin or kind, lived in brick cottages or mud huts, was really a matter of indifference to essential Franciscan life. What did essentially concern the Friar was that he must be one with the poor in the general conditions of their poverty. As a matter of fact, the mediæval peasant seldom saw money; he was paid for his labour in the things he most needed for his maintenance, and his food, clothing, and dwelling were not such as the poor in modern England are accustomed to. Of a coarser, and in some respects healthier quality, it may be doubted whether mediæval requirements would be adequate to meet the strain of present conditions of life. But St. Francis accepted for himself and his immediate disciples the hardships of the mediæval poor. Therefore he forbade the use of money to his Friars, gave them the coarse garments of the Umbrian peasant, and himself preferred to live in the mud huts of the day. Had the conditions of the mediæval peasantry been like those of the present working class, we should have found the economic conditions of the

present day reflected in the external life of the Friars, and not those of the Middle Ages. The Saint would have had nothing to do with wealth or property under present conditions any more than under the mediæval; he would have forbidden his Friars to hold capital of any sort as in disaccord with that absolute trust in Providence which he held to be the privilege of the poor; he would allow no possession of fixed property or estates which mark off the landed proprietor from the poor man. But we may take for granted that under modern conditions he would not have forbidden the use of money for mere current expenses in the same way as it is used by the poor. He would have insisted upon poor and modest dwellings, but not upon mud huts. Hence at the present time the Friars are permitted to make use of money to the extent indicated, but they are still forbidden to amass capital or accumulate property. Such permission belongs to the exigencies of a true development, and is not at all opposed to the proper Franciscan life. On the other hand, a permission

to hold landed property or capital would be of the nature of a relaxation, since it would be a departure from the condition of the poor. Again, as regards dwellings and dress, conditions change, so that what would be sufficient "for the living of a human life" (to adopt the reasonable standard set by Leo XIII. in his letter on "The Condition of the Working Classes") in one age is not always sufficient in another. Changes of climate and of the human temperament itself, and other external conditions over which men have little control, demand a higher standard of economic living than was sufficient for other times. Changes such as these in no way take from the ideal, so long as they are necessary "for the living of a human life," and in as far as they continue to exhibit that want of luxury or parsimony of comfort which belongs to the original type. To take an actual instance of a genuine development, true to the principles of St. Francis, and yet to the superficial observer apparently in contradiction. We have remarked how the Saint did not wish his Friars to have large churches of their own, since he



preferred his brethren to preach in the churches of others; and we have noted the fact that the relaxed brethren began to build large churches. Yet in themselves large churches are not necessarily opposed to the Franciscan ideal, though they are always a danger; and in some cases, at least, they seem to have been built by sheer force of circumstances. As we know, the Friars were the popular preachers—and almost the only preachers—in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Wherever they went crowds flocked to hear them, and frequently the parish churches were unable to hold the multitude, so that the Friar had to preach in the market-place or on the village green. After a time it would be thought desirable to erect some simple building capable of holding the crowds and sheltering them from the weather, especially in places where the Friars dwelt and preached regularly. In this case the inadequacy of the parish church rendered such building necessary, nor could any reasonable complaint be raised as long as the Friars did not refuse to preach in the parish churches, nor withdraw

their preachers into their own churches. The abuse only began when, instead of being content with simple buildings for the purpose of sheltering the crowd, they sought to emulate the abbeys in splendour and costliness. An illustration of departure from the ideal on the one hand, and on the other of adherence to it in circumstances which demanded a modification of the law, may be found in the two basilicas at Assisi—the basilica of the Sagro Convento and that of Portiuncula. The latter, built to hold a crowd who came to worship around the original chapel, retains in its vastness a severe simplicity and a poverty of ornament very striking to the visitor. It is evidently a place to hold the pilgrim crowd and nothing more.

Now although in many places the Friars undoubtedly departed from the original simplicity and poverty of their Order in the matter of buildings, yet generally speaking they seem to have been more or less faithful to the mind of their founder. As a rule their houses will be found to have been situated in the poorer quarters of the towns, and to have been simple

in structure and of no great value. Brewer, describing the early English foundations, says: "I have not been able to examine the primitive position of all their religious houses in England, but a glance at the more important will show the general correctness of this statement" (viz. that the Franciscans settled in the poorest localities). "In London, York, Warwick, Oxford, Bristol, Lynn and elsewhere their convents stood in the suburbs and abutted on the city walls. They made choice of the low, swampy, and undrained spots in the large towns, among the poorest and most neglected quarters. Unlike the magnificent monasteries and abbeys which excite admiration to this day, their buildings to the very last retained their primitive squat, low, and meagre proportions. Their first house at their settlement in London stood in the neighbourhood of Cornhill, where they built cells, stuffing the party-walls with dried grass. Near the shambles in Newgate, and close upon the city-gate of that name, on a spot appropriately called Stinking Lane, rose the chief house of the Order in England. In Oxford,

the parish of St. Ebbe's; in Cambridge, the decayed town gaol; in Norwich, the waterside running close to the walls of the town—are the special and chosen spots of the Franciscan missionary. In all instances the poverty of their buildings corresponded with those of the surrounding district; their living and lodging no better than the poorest among whom they settle. At Cambridge their chapel was erected by a single carpenter in one day. At Shrewsbury, where, owing to the liberality of the townsmen the dormitory walls had been built of stone, the minister of the Order had them removed and replaced with mud. Decorations and ornaments of all kinds are jealously excluded. . . . Their meals corresponded with the poverty of their buildings. Mendicancy might encourage idleness, but it also secured effectually the mean and meagre diet of the Friars. It kept them on a par with the masses among whom their founder intended them to labour.”<sup>1</sup> In this passage Brewer is describing the earliest English houses, but, as he says, “their buildings

<sup>1</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, i., Preface, pp. 17–19.

to the very last retained their primitive squat, low, and meagre proportions." There were some exceptions. At Reading, owing to royal munificence, the church of the Friars was certainly not in accord with their professed simplicity ; in London and York the churches of the Friars vied with the abbeys in richness and ornaments ; but as a general rule they kept their proper character. At the dissolution of the religious houses under Henry VIII., the Crown did not derive any large revenue from the Franciscan houses ; and eloquent testimony is borne to the fidelity of the Friars to the rule of poverty in the statements of some of the commissioners concerning some of the houses. Thus at Bridgnorth the Royal Commissioner wrote that "the warden and the brethren said that they were not able to live, for the charity of the people was so small that in three years they had not received in alms in ready money to the sum of 10s. by the year, but only live by a service that they had in the town in a chapel on the bridge." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brewer, xx.

Of the house at Shrewsbury at the dissolution it is said that it was the poorest religious house in the town, and that "the Friars had three or four acres of arable land adjoining it and little personal property ; no jewels, nothing but a plated crucifix and a mean chalice."<sup>1</sup> Again, the Royal Commissioner wrote of the Friars house at Aylesbury : "At Aylesbury I found them very poor and in debt, their ornaments very coarse, and very little stuff of household."<sup>2</sup> Even at Oxford, where relaxations soon appeared, long before the dissolution, the Friars were so poor that they had to sell their books to obtain bread.<sup>3</sup> Thus we see that the essential character of poverty was not lost amongst the Friars, even at the period when the spiritual efficiency of the Order seems to have been at its lowest ebb, and when undoubtedly many communities failed to retain the simplicity of their Rule. In a word, the genuine Franciscan spirit still prevailed, even in the midst of relaxation. None

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale, "Grey Friars, Shrewsbury."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, "Aylesbury."

<sup>3</sup> Little, chap. iv.

of these houses which I have mentioned belonged to the reformed or Observant Friars, whose poverty was still nearer to the original type. Hence the sweeping indictment brought by some modern critics against the Friars is not only inaccurate in fact, but unjust towards a body of men who when least fervent were still characterised by poverty, whilst at all times many of them have striven faithfully to keep close to their Founder, and so have preserved intact the living Franciscan tradition.

We pass now to the question of learning. Nothing is more clear in the history of St. Francis than that he was opposed to his immediate disciples taking to scientific study. In this matter he was as stern as in regard to poverty. Speaking once of certain brethren who were anxious to study, he exclaimed: "These brethren of mine that are led away by curiosity of knowledge, in the day of tribulation shall find their hands empty. Therefore I would that they be rather built up in godliness, so that when the time of tribulation shall come, they may have their Lord with them in their straits ;

for verily tribulation shall come, such as that books useful for nought, shall be cast aside into lockers and dark corners." At another time he said: "Many brethren there be who set all their study and care upon acquiring knowledge, letting go their holy calling by wandering forth both in mind and body beyond the way of humility and holy poverty." And once when a novice applied for leave to have a psalter, the Saint refused, saying: "Brother, I likewise have been tempted to have books, but whilst I still knew not the will of God therein I took a book wherein were written the Holy Gospels, and I prayed unto the Lord that He would show me of this matter. And when I had made an end of praying, on the first opening of the book I lighted on that word of the Holy Gospel: 'Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but unto others in parables.'" The Saint added: "So many there be that do willingly raise themselves up unto knowledge, that he shall be blessed who shall make himself barren for the love of our Lord God." Moreover, he laid down as a precept



in his last Rule, "that the brethren who cannot read shall not seek to learn." So far the case seems to stand directly against the lawfulness of the Friars taking to scientific pursuits. Yet, on the other hand, St. Francis, though with a certain evident reluctance, himself commissioned St. Anthony to teach the brethren theology. And when afterwards he heard that the Friars thus instructed were preaching with unction and success he seems to have been less opposed to study. Then we have the testimony of the author of the *Speculum*—who is ever inclined to state the more rigid view—that St. Francis warned the brethren against study, "not because the reading of Holy Scripture was displeasing to him, but that he might withdraw them from over much care for learning. For he would rather they be good brethren in charity than smatterers in the curiosities of knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

In order to justly appreciate the Saint's intention in this matter we must take into account the circumstances in which he found himself.

<sup>1</sup> *Spec. Perfect.*, cap. lxix.

For the significance of a man's word or action in any particular instance is as much modified by his circumstances as is any text by its context.

St. Francis' ideal, it must be remembered, was to follow Christ in all simplicity of heart and sincerity of mind. Whatever would take away from this simplicity and sincerity was to him an evil to be avoided. As he saw the world, two evils especially afflicted Christendom—the arrogance of wealth and the arrogance of academic learning. The civilised world was overrun with scholars, the majority of whom sought nothing better than intellectual brilliancy and dissipation; and intellectual dissipation is as ruinous to the spiritual life as carnal luxury. The two chief studies of the schools at the time were dialectics and law. Here and there a thinker like St. Anselm was honestly searching for truth, but the general tendency of the schools was to stifle real thought and exalt a lifeless legalism and brilliant sophistry. The contest between St. Bernard and Abelard was not merely a dispute about special points of doctrine, but rather an episode in the eternal struggle between

the thinker and the mere logician. Abelard was little else than an intellectual juggler, and he was typical of the scholastic temper of the age. It was manifestly against this temper of mind that St. Francis wished to guard his brethren. He was opposed not to Thought, but to the Intellectualism which is the caricature of thought. His was the prophetic instinct. For was not the break-up of Christendom in the sixteenth century due as much to this very intellectualism as to material luxury?

But in spite of the Saint's dread of the schools, the Franciscan movement was of its very nature bound to enter there and influence the course of scientific study. The Friar was destined to introduce a new life into the university, as well as into society at large. And it was St. Francis himself, with his simplicity and directness of thought, who set the type for the Franciscan thinker. The Friars, both Dominican and Franciscan, when they entered the schools took with them to their studies a sincerity of purpose and love of truth which had hitherto been wanting. They made

use of the scholastic method, but it was with the honest purpose of getting at the truth of things.

Very soon they put life into the dry bones of the legists and sophists whom they found there, and their presence set men's minds free, and a period of intellectual achievement was begun, unsurpassed in the history of Thought. Englishmen, long accustomed to regard the Middle Ages as a dark period, and cut off from direct knowledge of the period by their ignorance of mediæval literature, are only now beginning to acknowledge the great work done in the thirteenth century by the Catholic thinkers. At that time an endeavour was made to unify the whole Christian consciousness. Defective as the system was in some respects, and especially on the part of modern scientific experiment, yet as a harmony of Objective Thought it is marvellous. Most subtle in analysis of ideas, the Schools under the direction of the Friars ever strove to get at the exact contents of a thought. In doing this they made apparent the need of the experimental

method, and thus carried Thought a step beyond their own system.

What is notable about the Franciscan Friars is that they generally aimed at positive organic Thought, and had rather a contempt for dialectical skill, though they necessarily had to make use of the scholastic method in their disputations. But the tendency of their best thinkers, and that which is typical of the genuine Franciscan mind, is towards direct observation and positive knowledge of the facts of life. St. Bonaventure in Theology and Roger Bacon in Natural Science are both typical in their own way of the true Franciscan thinker. The one, rising above dialectics, looked straight into the religious consciousness of the Christian soul; the other endeavoured to know Nature as it is. Both manifested that simplicity of mind which St. Francis looked for in vain amongst the schoolmen of his day, and both, whilst departing from the mere letter of the law, were true to the spirit which dictated it. They were genuine interpreters of St. Francis' mind in circumstances beyond the direct experience of the Saint himself.

On the other hand, just as there were Friars who fell from the Franciscan ideal of poverty, so there were those who, entering into the schools, fell a prey to the vicious tendencies to be found there, and became more or less imbued with the dialectical spirit, and lost the simplicity and directness of the Franciscan mind. In fact, the Friars in the universities became in time largely dominated by the academic spirit, and departed from the way set them by their own proper leaders. This decadence was owing probably to the fact already noticed, that large numbers of young scholars were received into the Order who had no true vocation, and who were received simply to give the Order an ephemeral advantage in the universities. The secular mind of the universities thus had its revenge upon the Friars, and these became its followers rather than its leaders. Of these degenerate Franciscan thinkers, Occam and the Nominalists are the most prominent examples. But there were others, not so extreme, in whom the false tendency is visible. The Scotists were in some

measure of this colour. As St. Bonaventure and Roger Bacon are types of genuine Franciscan Thought, so Scotus is rightly regarded as the most brilliant type of the school which formed itself within the Order, and yet was not truly of it. Scotus is sometimes regarded as the last of the great mediæval Schoolmen. Great he undoubtedly was, but he cannot be taken as typical of the best period of the schools under the influence of the Friars. His very brilliance is the autumnal glare of an age whose work is done. In his constant endeavour to get at the ultimate realities of thought he showed something of the old Franciscan spirit, and in theology developed the traditional teaching of the Order, and thus merits to be ranked amongst its most prominent theologians. But his general style of thought, his subtlety and excessive use of dialectic, was a departure from the best Franciscan type, and manifested the influence of that debased scholasticism which was again invading the schools. It has been said of him that "his extraordinary acuteness of mind led him rather to criticise

than to develop the work of the thirteenth century. . . . His subtlety, his desultory criticisms, and his abstruse style make him far more difficult reading than the earlier Schoolmen"—a description not at all redolent of Franciscan simplicity. It is added: "Scotus cannot be considered as the continuator of the old Franciscan School, but rather as the founder of a new school which rightly bears his name. His excessive realism has a tendency quite opposed to the Platonism of the early members of his Order, and, indeed, agrees with Nominalism on many points. His stiff and dry style is very different from the ease and grace which charm us in St. Bonaventure."<sup>1</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Capuchins forbade their Friars to follow Scotus, and ordered them to return to the tradition of the earlier school.<sup>2</sup>

Here, then, we find a legitimate development of the Franciscan mind, and its corruption; and whilst the one is opposed to the mind of

<sup>1</sup> *Catholic Theology*, by Wilhelm and Scannell, vol. i. (Introduction).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *La Scholastique et les Traditions Franciscaines*, par T. R. P. Prosper de Martigne. (Paris, 1888.)



St. Francis and of the nature of that scholastic temperament with which the Saint would have no dealings, the other is a true reflection of his own simple and direct spirit. And thus St. Francis has continued to live in his disciples through many ages different from his own, and in them his own spirit has been developed, expanding itself with the growth of years and as changing circumstances demand, but itself remaining the same.

When, then, we hear it said that the Church betrayed the cause of St. Francis, because she permitted the Friars to move beyond the lines of external activity set for the first communities, we are forced to admit a lack of historical judgment.

It may, however, be urged that the Church ought at least to have refrained from giving her official sanction to the relaxations which eventually found a place in the Order under ecclesiastical approbation. In this way, it is said, the Church lent itself to the disparagement of St. Francis' ideal. But it must be remembered that it is not the office of the Church to

coerce men to live according to the highest ideals ; she could not do so if she wished. The Church is meant to help men along the road of life. She fosters the highest ideals, but at the same time maintains lesser ideals for those who are not strong enough to strive for the highest ; and in doing so she follows the line of action of the Divine Redeemer Himself, who called some to be apostles, whilst others He left in their homes. So the Church has a duty to the weaker members who, whilst willing to go beyond the ordinary precepts of Christian life, yet shrink from the highest counsels. For these she approves the relaxed forms of an Order, not as though these were the best, but simply because they are good in themselves so far as they go and point to the higher standard. Hence certain Franciscan communities were allowed to receive revenues and build large convents, though in other respects they endeavoured to follow the Franciscan life. At the same time the Church has always encouraged and favoured the reforms ; though it is characteristic of her government that she has always insisted on the need of

development and would not tolerate any narrow theory which, whilst preserving the pictorial presentment of the early Friars, would impair the vitality and practical usefulness of the Order. For this reason she condemned the fanatical Zealots of the fourteenth century whilst approving of the Observant Reform.

Of the causes which tended to bring about relaxations in the Order, undoubtedly the most efficient was the popular favour in which the Friars were held. All classes of people were glad to welcome the Friar, and townsfolk and nobles vied with each other in donations; so that the Friars having parted with their own purses, virtually had the control of the purses of their neighbours. They had not to ask; gifts were forced upon them. That they remained as faithful to the rule of poverty as they did in the presence of so great a temptation is surely a witness to their high character.

There is one episode in the development of the Friars to which reference must be made. I have said that love of poverty and true Franciscan Thought generally went together.

William Occam, however, whose mind was completely out of harmony with the genuine Franciscan School, is notable, not only for his theory of Nominalism, but also for his religious campaign on behalf of rigid observance. He it was who went into schism rather than submit to a Papal decision which seemed to him a relaxation of the Rule. But there is this to be said. His conception of poverty was no more in accordance with the mind of St. Francis than was his Nominalism. With him poverty was not a gospel but a political programme, as it had been formerly with the Waldenses; his conception of the Franciscan life was not spiritual but legalistic. He was neither Franciscan in thought nor in poverty.

So far, then, I have endeavoured to show what sort of man the Franciscan Friar was, and in what his proper life consisted. At a time when so much is written about St. Francis and his Order, it is well to have an exact knowledge of the Friars' life and mission as it is written in their history, and as it is maintained in their tradition.

If one might venture to suggest in a word the test of true Franciscan development—that which might easily be recognised as in general distinguishing the true from the false, whether in regard to learning or to external conduct—we should say that it is simplicity. Wherever there is a want of simplicity, there the true Franciscan spirit is wanting; on the other hand, the simple life is so far the Franciscan life. And inasmuch as the Franciscan is a living protest against the want of simplicity amongst the Christian people, he is faithful to the ideal and mission of his founder.

## VII.

But “by their fruits ye shall know them.” The Franciscan Friar had hardly arrived upon the scene of history before his influence began to be felt in almost every department of life. In the university and the court, in the castle and the poor man’s dwelling, in the pulpit and the confessional—the Friar was the most power-

ful personality of the time. As Gregorovius has said: "The mendicant brothers influenced every stratum of society. They thrust the secular clergy from the confessional and the pulpit; they filled the chairs of the university; they were the greatest teachers of scholastic learning. . . . They sat in the college of cardinals, and as popes mounted the sacred chair. Their voices whispered to the consciences of the citizen in the inmost chamber of his dwelling, and at the most sumptuous courts into the ears of the king, whose confessors and counsellors they were. Their accents resounded in the halls of the Lateran, and in the stormy parliaments of the republics. They saw and heard everything."<sup>1</sup> Their influence was as elevating as it was wide. They not only intervened in the affairs of the world, but they created new ideals in the imagination of the people, opened out new lines of thought, and turned men's energies in new directions. They were, in a word, a formative influence in the history of Christendom.

<sup>1</sup> *History of the City of Rome*, Book ix. chap. 3.

One of the strangest things about them is that they found a welcome in all ranks of society and amongst all parties. The townsmen received them with enthusiasm, but so did princes and nobles. The ignorant flocked to their sermons and the learned to their lectures. Of course they had enemies, chiefly among the monastic clergy, who looked with a jealous eye upon the new Orders and their popularity; but even among the Monks they had many friends, and, as at Assisi and at Reading, frequently it was the Benedictine abbey which gave the Friars land or house. The fact was that the Franciscan Friar represented a new ideal which belonged exclusively to no class or party, but answered to all the tendencies which were stirring the hearts of men at the period. In them the townsmen found religion linked with the spirit of democratic freedom; whilst the noble soon learned to regard them as the one stable element in the midst of social revolution, for they had no material interest in the issue, and were concerned only for the common good. The Monk whose soul had been fed on the new

mysticism saw in the Friars the response to his own aspiration ; whilst in the university they stood for scientific knowledge against pedantry and sophism. Hence they attracted men of all ranks and parties ; nobles and townsfolk, monks and university graduates were found wearing the habit of poverty. Even bishops and abbots were found to give up their mitres to become Friars.<sup>1</sup>

So the Friars, drawn from all ranks in society and friends of all, were especially fitted to act as arbitrators and peacemakers in the political quarrels of the thirteenth century. Thus in England in 1233, Brother Agnellus, the Provincial-Minister, was sent by the King to the Earl Marshal, at that time in league with the Welsh against his Sovereign, to induce the Earl to submit and avert civil war. Agnellus was unfortunately unsuccessful, owing chiefly to the fact that the Earl could not trust the King's

<sup>1</sup> When the Friars were building their church at Oxford a former Bishop of Hereford and a former Abbot of Osney, who had become Friars, "carried water and sand and stones for the building of the place" (see Little, chap. i.).



word.<sup>1</sup> More fortunate were two other Friars in this same year. Brother Gerard of Modena actually put an end to the feud which was dividing the republic of Parma into hostile camps; and another Friar made peace between the nobles and people of Piacenza.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and even as late as the seventeenth, the Friars were frequently chosen to bring about peace between contending factions, or were sent as ambassadors of the Holy See to avert war between Christian nations. They were by common consent the accepted peacemakers.

In another way, too, they were able to exert their influence in politics. Very generally they acted as secretaries to princes and nobles, and thus had a voice in political affairs. Of the keen interest which the Friars took in the welfare of the realm an instance is found in the letters of Adam de Marisco,<sup>3</sup> the confidant of Simon de Montfort and Bishop Grosseteste.

<sup>1</sup> Eccleston, chap. xiii.; *Roger of Wendover's Chronicle*, A.D. 1233.

<sup>2</sup> *Mores Catholici*, ix. p. 446.

<sup>3</sup> *Monumenta Franciscana*, i. (edited by Brewer).

Two facts, it is said, contributed to make them useful on political embassies. They "often possessed the courtesy and charm of manner which is born of sympathy," says Professor Little, "and it was perhaps to this quality that their employment as diplomatic agents is to be attributed."<sup>1</sup> In 1241, when some Friars were chosen by the Bishops of England to go on an embassy to the Emperor Frederic II., to induce him to make his peace with the Church, the reason given for their appointment was stated thus: "*Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator.*"<sup>2</sup> But besides their urbanity and genial manners, the Friars had a wide knowledge of life, gained by their constant intercourse with all sorts and conditions of men. As Gregorovius has said in the passage already quoted, "They saw and heard everything." One has only to glance through the letters of Adam de Marisco to learn how the Friars gained their knowledge of the world. There we find him corresponding with

<sup>1</sup> Little, chap i. p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> "The empty-handed traveller shall sing in the presence of the robber."

Bishops about the spiritual and temporal management of their dioceses; with Simon de Montfort about the affairs of the realm. In one letter he intervenes on behalf of a poor woman against a tyrannous official of the Archbishop of Canterbury; further, he takes an interest in the affairs of a poor rector; then he corresponds with various ladies concerning the state of their souls; and again, he intercedes with the superiors of his Order on behalf of a runaway Friar. These are a few of the subjects in which he is interested, but they reveal to us some of the sources of the Friar's knowledge of men.

Occasionally we find the Friars taking sides in party politics. They were accused of inciting the Peasants' Revolt, but this charge they indignantly denied in a letter to John of Gaunt in 1382. But Henry IV. found some of them guilty of conspiracy in the beginning of his reign, and had them hanged.<sup>1</sup> They certainly were attached to Richard II., and supported his liberal policy; just as in the reign of Henry III. their sympathies were with Simon de Montfort

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs' *Constitutional History*, iii. 36.

and the party of constitutional reform. Yet, as a rule, though they favoured the party of political freedom, they intervened in actual politics only as peacemakers.

Their influence on the social condition of the people was still more remarkable. Having themselves embraced poverty and made themselves from a religious motive *minores*, or members of the lower class, they gave to poverty and the poor a religious consecration which, more than anything else, tended to revolutionise the mediæval world. For the mediæval nations long retained the contempt for poverty and weakness which was characteristic of their Teutonic ancestry. They had, indeed, come to modify their natural disposition so far as to relieve the poor in their most crying necessities; but it was hard for the Teutonic noble or merchant to think of the peasant or the leper as a fellow-being having a natural equality with himself. The noble might fling a coin to a beggar, but unless he were especially saintly he would never think of grasping the beggar's hand as a fellow-man.

At the monastery gate the beggar found the charity of Christian fellowship; at the castle or at the merchant's door he was still a being of a lower order, who must not approach too near. But the Friars mingled freely and naturally with the very poorest, and regarded them as brethren. Very significant, when we remember the attitude of the higher classes towards the lower at the period, is the admonition of St. Francis to his Friars, that "they ought to rejoice when they converse with persons who are mean and despised by the world."<sup>1</sup> To the mediæval world the most heroic act of the Friars was their habit of nursing the lepers wherever they went, and their action in this matter not only raised the status of the poor in the eyes of the mediæval world, but induced the nations to give more care to the unfortunate sufferers. As Brewer remarks:<sup>2</sup> "If by the establishment of leper hospitals and a general improvement of the towns that terrible scourge has so completely disappeared that its very

<sup>1</sup> Rule of 1221, chap. ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, i. (Introduction).

name is disarmed of all meaning, it was not so then (in the thirteenth century). Mankind gained truer notions of it and of their duty towards those who were afflicted by it, but St. Francis set the example." Undoubtedly the Friars' care for the sick and poor has been one of the chief causes of their popularity. Perhaps in all Franciscan history there is no finer story than that of the Capuchin Chapter of 1631. The Friars had met to deliberate upon certain important changes in their constitutions when the great pestilence broke out. They at once suspended their deliberations to go and nurse the stricken people of the neighbourhood. Not until 1633 did they resume their chapter, and then many seats were vacant.<sup>1</sup>

Brewer has well pointed out the part taken by the Friars in the formation of Christian society in the West. Three great attempts, he says, were made by mediæval Christendom to weld together the various elements in Christian

<sup>1</sup> *Annali Cappuchini*, by P. Pellegrino da Forlì, A.D. 1633. Many instances are given of the efforts made by the Friars to cope with the great pestilence.

society. "St. Benedict, the founder of Western monkery, found a way of bringing together the rude, rough Goth and the polished Roman patrician on the common field of manual labour. . . . There came a second attempt in the founding of the military orders where the knightly spirit of Europe was drawn forth in all its strength and tenderness, by committing to the strong the care of the weak, to the soldier the protection of the widow and the orphan. Last, and harder than all, came the experiment of St. Francis, to devote to the poor and neglected outcasts of the large towns of Europe, to the untended leper, the abandoned beggar, the sickly mechanic, to their wives and children, whatever of piety and gentleness could be controlled to this purpose."

But the Friar did far more than help to remedy the hardships of the poor, he ennobled poverty itself. "The oppressed people," says Gregorovius, "saw despised poverty exalted on an altar and placed in the glory of heaven." Thus the self-respect of the poor was established and strengthened, and they began to feel them-

selves raised to a human equality with those in more fortunate social circumstances. In this self-respect lay the only secure foundation of that habit of independence which had already created the burgher class and was before long to emancipate the peasant. Hence it has been truly said that the Friar was "the representative of the third estate, the great lower mass of the people in their combined upward striving towards a position self-sustained and independent."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, however, that the Friar gave to the poor a sense of their proper dignity, he created in the minds of noble and burgher a reverence for poverty as that condition of life which Jesus Christ and the apostles chose as their earthly portion. Poverty was no longer necessarily a mark of degradation. Thus rich and poor were brought more closely together in sympathy and a sense of human fellowship.

In this work of welding together the various orders of society at the very time when society seemed most likely to break up into hostile

<sup>1</sup> Thode, quoted by Harnack, *Hist. of Dogma*, vol. vi. chap. 2.



factions, the Friars were greatly assisted by the tertiaries—a body of lay men and women, who, living in the world and in their own homes, were yet considered as members of the Franciscan family, and, as far as possible, observed the Franciscan rule of humility, simplicity, and charity. These tertiaries were taken, like the Friars, from every rank in society, from the prince to the peasant, and one of the rules of the association was that every tertiary must regard every other tertiary with fraternal love, and that they should care for each other and respect each other as members of one family. The number of tertiaries was very large; hardly a family, perhaps, but had at least one member a tertiary. And thus the Franciscan influence was spread, welding together the various orders in society.

In family relations, equally as in social, the influence of the Friar was felt. And in this matter he had unique opportunities, for rich and poor frequently entertained him in their own homes, and he was thus brought within the sanctuary of domestic life. In one respect

especially did he influence the family life of the time, and that was in his high respect for woman. Nothing in the life of St. Francis is more elevating than his knightly courtesy towards womankind. We find it manifested in his ideal conception of the Lady Poverty, in his relations with St. Clare and the Lady Giacomada Settisoli, and in his tender devotion to the Virgin Mother of God. In this respect, as in so much else, his spirit was in direct contradiction with that of the sectaries of his time, who in large measure imbibed the teaching of the Manicheans. Partly owing to their doctrines, and partly to the prevalent luxury of the age, all human relationships had become debased; marriage was losing its sanctity, and woman her dignity. It was the Franciscan Friar, with his deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin and his chivalric respect for women, who restored woman to her rightful position in Christian society, encircling her brow with a halo of sanctity as the earthly image of the Queen of Heaven, and who gave back to mar-

riage in popular estimation its high sacramental dignity.<sup>1</sup>

And as he taught men to regard the marital relationship as sacred, so, too, he gave increased dignity to all human life. It was a notable trait of the Friar's preaching that he brought before the people the human character of our Divine Lord, and dwelt much upon the story of His life on earth, presenting it to men as the type of their earthly life. This, of course, is what we should expect when we know the genesis of the Franciscan movement and its relationship with mediæval piety. When the Friars preached they set forth no dry abstract of Christian dogma or duty. They told of Christ's home-life at Nazareth; of His compassion on the hungry multitudes and of His tender pity for the sorrowing; of His yearning for the sinful soul; of His love for His mother and His disciples; of His hardships and Passion. And the people, listening, felt how near Christ

<sup>1</sup> Chaucer in his Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, and Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet*, both bear witness to the popular estimate of the Friars' attitude towards marriage. Manzoni has borne similar witness in *I Promessi Sposi*.

was to themselves in His human nature, and so gained a deep reverence for human life.

And the Friar himself was so simply natural and human in his dealings with men. There was about him no stiff formalism; he did not preach from books but from experience and observation, and he spoke in plain, unaffected language which all might understand, using freely the incidents of daily life to illustrate his subject. One of the charges brought against the Friars was that in their sermons they now adopted the tone of flattery, now the tone of censure and sarcasm. In other words, they spoke as man to man. Anyhow they reached the hearts of the people, and that is what the preacher has to do. Their preaching, however, was not of the purely emotional type, but conveyed clear dogmatic instruction on all the chief truths of religion. Some idea of the subject-matter of their teaching may be gained from the mystery plays which the Friars caused to be acted on certain festivals for the instruction of the people. These plays are replete with solid instruction presented in an imagina-

tive form, such as would commend it to the intelligence of the multitude. The dramatic instinct seems, indeed, to have been innate in the Order, and was in keeping with the intensely human character of the Friars. It was St. Francis himself who originated the spectacular representation of the Nativity, so familiar in Catholic churches at Christmastide.

One effect of the strong humanising influence of the Friars is seen in the impetus they gave to the development of national languages and of art. Without a national tongue a people have no proper vehicle for the expression of their natural feelings, and are apt to become formal and insincere. Art, in like manner, faithfully represents the moral nature and actual character of a period.

Now, to the Friars' habit of preaching in the language of the people, and not in Latin, is due in some measure the formation of the English tongue. They "prepared the way for the English prose of Chaucer," says Professor Little.<sup>1</sup> Whilst in Italy, as Frederic Ozanam has pointed

<sup>1</sup> *Grey Friars in Oxford*, chap. v.

out in his *Poètes Franciscains*, they prepared the way for Dante and modern Italian.

Their influence on art is too well known to need more than a passing notice. In their presence the painters of Italy threw aside the stiff and formal lines of the earlier period and gave us the more natural forms of Giotto and his contemporaries. And yet the deep human feeling of the Friars was intensely spiritual, as is evident in the art which they inspired. In their own persons they proved the Catholic principle that the antithesis of spirituality is not humanity but brutality. Man is never more truly human than when he is most spiritual, and never spiritual when he is not human.

Then, again, the Friars exerted an influence upon the ecclesiastical system. Especially did they strengthen the conception of Catholic unity and of the supreme authority of the Holy See at a period when the tendency to create national churches first showed itself in European politics. Undoubtedly they averted for several centuries the schisms which eventually took

place. In England, from the time of Henry II., the danger of national schism was constantly present, though the people were hardly conscious of it. The policy of the Plantagenets was to centre all authority in the Crown. The murder of St. Thomas à Becket brought the King to a pause, but his spirit lived in his successors, and the ill-advised policy of the Holy See too often gave the Crown an excuse for its own policy. At the time of the arrival of the Friars in England the nation, and especially the towns, were greatly incensed against the endeavour of the Pope to levy taxes and to put foreign clerics into English benefices. It says much for the popularity of the Friars that they retained their hold on the people's affection even when, a few years later, the Pope commissioned certain of their Order to collect the taxes for the Crusade, in spite of the protests of nobles and clergy.<sup>1</sup> However, though the champions of Papal authority, they did not hesitate to support Bishop Grosseteste in his efforts to induce the Roman Court to alter its policy. Yet at

<sup>1</sup> See *Matthew of Westminster's Chronicle*, A.D. 1247.

this difficult period it was that they kept the nation loyal to Rome.

Thus it was, as we said in the beginning, that the Friars saved both Church and State.

### VIII.

And now, reader, that we have seen what sort of men the Franciscan Friars were, and what were their ideal and aims, I invite you to the perusal of the story of the first Friars who settled in England, as chronicled by one of their immediate successors. Thomas of Eccleston wrote his account some thirty-five or forty years after the arrival of the Blessed Agnellus of Pisa and his companions. For twenty-five years he had been collecting matter for his *Chronicle* and he knew many of the Friars whose names he records.<sup>1</sup> His work has not the poetic charm of the Fioretti. The greyness of the English sky is reflected in his style, just as the sunshine of Italy pervades the later book. Yet in the one

<sup>1</sup> See Eccleston, Introduction and chap. i.



as in the other there is the same fresh and invigorating atmosphere of mind; the same directness and simplicity of the Franciscan spirit. Thomas of Eccleston has all the implicit belief in his Order which is the charm of an early chronicler; and because of his belief he has no misgiving about manifesting occasionally the human weakness of his brethren. He not only tells us of the wonderful fervour of spirit which animated the Friars, of their love of poverty and deep spirituality; he also tells the story of the Friar who was once a very spiritual man, but being appointed guardian of a convent, henceforth no longer discoursed of heavenly things, but could only say, "Da, da, da"—"Give, give, give." He informs us, too, with frankness how some of the brethren departed from the way of their sainted Founder, and built large houses. He does not hesitate to record the saying of the King that if the Friars had been less importunate in seeking privileges or in asking alms, they might have had even greater success than they had. Yet it is impossible to read his *Chronicle* without gaining a greater

admiration for the heroic disciples, who, in spite of human weaknesses, valiantly strove to walk in the footsteps of the *Poverello* of Assisi. As Brewer has remarked: "Without any of the ambition of the professed historian, he (Eccleston) has contrived to compose a narrative of thirty years, which cannot fail of interesting his readers, whether curious or not in the progress of the Order to which he belonged. He gives us what no other writer, less simple and zealous, would have cared or perhaps been willing to give—a clear, unvarnished picture of the Friars in their poverty, and before their Order had been glorified by the eminent Schoolmen of a later period. In this little work the reader may see the Friar in his cell or his refectory, sitting round the fire and warming his drop of sour beer, or shedding tears at Mass in his little chapel of wood; or he may listen to the Provincial Minister in the infirmary warning the novices in the peculiar form of apologue or fable which made the Friars famous, and associated their names with the most pithy apothegms and stories throughout Christendom."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Monumenta Franc.*, ii. p. 23.

The *Chronicle* is by no means a full account of the early history of the Friars in England. Eccleston, in fact, gives us hardly any glimpse of the suspicion and ill-will with which the Friars were in the first instance too often greeted at their first arrival in England, as in Germany. He tells us how at Canterbury, for days after they came there, they shut themselves up in a room, not venturing out until evening, when they descended to the schoolroom to warm their beer over the school fire. We must go to the *Chronicle of Lanercost* to discover the reason for this timidity. There it is related how, when the Friars landed at Dover, they went to a nobleman's house to ask for shelter and food. And the nobleman, taking them for vagabonds or idiots, locked them up in a strong chamber and went to consult his neighbours as to what he should do with them. Meanwhile the Friars, weary after their long journey and unsuspecting, laid down on the floor and went to sleep. At daybreak they got up and thought to continue their journey, but found themselves locked in. Meanwhile news had got abroad concerning the

strangers, and a crowd gathered to see them brought forth. A magistrate, who was called in, declared them to be spies and robbers. Whereupon one of the Friars took his cord and smilingly offered it to the magistrate, saying: "If we be robbers, here is a rope to hang us with." This jest disarmed suspicion, and they were set free, and continued their journey to Canterbury.

Bartholomew of Pisa, in his *Liber Conformitatum* relates a somewhat similar incident of the Friars who went to Oxford. On their way thither they sought shelter one night at a grange belonging to the Benedictine Monks of Abingdon. The porter, "taking them for mummers, and not God's servants, drove them away reproachfully, and thrust them out of the gates." A young Monk, however, had compassion on them, and procured them shelter. He himself afterwards became a Friar.

Another instance is given in the *Lanercost Chronicle* of the ill-will which met the Friars, and how the ill-will was converted into friendship. Near Oxford there was a knight who

hated the Friars' mode of life, and used them bitterly, and spoke ill of them whenever he had an opportunity. Now it happened on Christmas Day that the Friars went forth to preach. "As two of them were going along through a neighbouring wood, picking their way along the rugged path over the frozen mud and rigid snow, whilst the blood lay in the track of their naked feet without their perceiving it, the junior said to the elder, 'Father, shall I sing and lighten the journey?' And on leave being granted, he thundered forth a *Salve Regina misericordiæ*. It so chanced that the soldier, by no means in good humour with them, was following the same road without their knowledge. Now when the hymn was concluded, as the soldier saw the prints of the blood from their naked feet in the wood, he who had been the consoler said with a sort of self-congratulation to his companion, 'Brother, was not that antiphonal well sung?' Whereupon the soldier, breaking in upon their talk, 'Yes, by the Lord, it was; and may the Lord bless and prosper you, who, like the Apostles, are patient in

necessities and rejoice in tribulation.' And at this word he slipped from his horse, and asked pardon on his knees for the harsh judgments he had passed upon them."<sup>1</sup>

These incidents point to another chapter in the chronicles of the early Friars which Eccleston did not see fit to give us. The one instance of ill-usage recorded by him refers to Brother Solomon, who, when a novice, went to ask an alms of his own sister. She, bringing him some bread, turned away her face and exclaimed, "Cursed be the hour in which I have ever seen thee."<sup>2</sup> Truly the Friars were not yet famous throughout the land!

But with the entrance into the Order of such men as Haymo of Faversham and Adam de Marisco, the Order acquired great fame and reverence amongst the learned, and the missionary zeal of the Friars soon gained them the respect of the populace. Their increase henceforth was marvellous. Within a very few years they had houses in all the larger towns.

<sup>1</sup> Brewer's translation, *Monumenta Franc.*, i. p. 632.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. iii.

Eccleston himself tells us that in the thirty-second year after their arrival the Friars numbered one thousand two hundred and forty-two members, and they had forty-nine houses.

Of the English Friars in the heyday of their influence and fame, it is to be noted that they were particularly zealous for the observance of the rule of poverty. Eccleston records how that zealous upholder of the primitive simplicity, John of Parma, seventh Minister-General of the Order, praised the English province for its spirit of observance, wishing that it might be set in the centre of the world to be an example to all other provinces. And it was the English Friars who most strenuously stood for the primitive rule, when there was some question of modifying its rigour.<sup>1</sup>

And so it was even unto the end. Amongst all the provinces of the Order the English maintained its reputation as that which was most true to Franciscan poverty. There were indeed, relaxations, and in some of the houses the tradition of poverty was but indifferently

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xii.

maintained. The generosity of the nobles and townsfolk was a temptation the Friars did not always resist as they should. At London, Southampton, and Reading they permitted churches to be built for them which were not in accordance with the simplicity of their rule. Even in Eccleston's time we find the tendency showing itself in some places to build large churches and houses. Then, again, contrary to their Rule, some of them began to receive legacies, and to seek for privileges which brought them into conflict with the clergy and the heads of the universities. In the universities especially the custom seems to have grown up of allowing the Friars who were lecturing to have a purse for their own private use. So that by the middle of the fourteenth century there was much that required reforming amongst the English Friars. And it is worthy of remark that just at this time, when the Friars were least observant, their popularity began to wane. Yet on the whole the province kept within measurable distance of the Franciscan ideal. Very few of their houses had revenues, and the



majority of the communities seem to have been very poor, since in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries many of them had to sell their books in order to live. Undoubtedly the great plague had much to do with the deterioration of the Order. The Friars, greatly reduced in number and unable to maintain regular observance even in the houses where the younger members were trained, lost much of their religious fervour. But at the time of the dissolution they already showed signs of revival, and it seems probable that the greater part of the province would have been incorporated in the Observant Reform had the communities not been dispersed.

Another point to be noted about the English Friars was their remarkable thirst for knowledge. The greatest of the Franciscan Schoolmen, with the exception of St. Bonaventure, came from England. Alexander of Hales, Adam de Marisco, Haymo of Faversham, Richard Middleton, Duns Scotus, William Occam—for good or for evil these names stand as a testimony to the scholastic learning of the English Friars; whilst in natural science Roger

Bacon and Thomas Bungay were precursors of the modern experimental method. So well known were their merits that the English province had constantly to supply readers to other provinces. Under their influence and that of the Dominicans, Oxford soon rivalled Paris and Bologna. As Anthony à Wood has declared, the English university became, by reason of Roger Bacon and the other mendicants, "deservedly styled at this time 'Emporium Optimarum Disciplinarum.'"<sup>1</sup> Not only did they enkindle a new spirit of learning in the university, but they seem to have largely influenced its development in other ways. The establishment of the Friars' schools had probably much to do with the evolution of the collegiate system at Oxford.<sup>2</sup> Certain it is that Balliol College owes its existence to the advice given by a Franciscan Friar to the widow of Sir John de Balliol; and the founder of Merton was an intimate friend of Adam de Marisco.

The English Friars were, moreover, great col-

<sup>1</sup> *University of Oxford*, Book i., A.D. 1226.

<sup>2</sup> Little, *Grey Friars in Oxford*, chap. i.

lectors of books. One of the charges brought against them by Richard Fitz-Ralph, Archbishop of Armagh, in his appeal to the Pope in 1257, was "that in the faculties of Arts, Theology, Canon Law, and, as many assert, Medicine and Civil Law, scarcely a useful book is to be found in the market, but all are bought up by the Friars, so that in every convent is a great and noble library, and everyone of them who has a recognised position in the universities (and such are innumerable) has also a noble library."<sup>1</sup> And Richard of Bury, speaking of the houses of the Friars in his *Philo-biblon*, says: "There are heaped up amid the utmost poverty the utmost treasures of wisdom." At the dissolution, however, these libraries were no longer in existence, as they had been gradually parted with to obtain the means of living.

But the Friars, even at the universities, were before all things men of action and utility. Much as they gave themselves to study, they never lost their interest in actual affairs. They

<sup>1</sup> *Grey Friars in Oxford*, chap. iv.

were always at hand to help and advise those in difficulties, of whatever rank they might be in society. At Oxford, notwithstanding all their scientific labours, they were before all else active workers, preaching and hearing confessions. So great were the crowds who came to them to confession, that in 1300 the Minister-Provincial sought the Bishop's licence for twenty-two of the brethren to hear confessions. The Bishop, however, only licensed eight, much to the Minister's disappointment.

Even after their first influence had declined, they still retained the confidence of the people, much to the disgust of Wiclif and the Lollards. At first Wiclif was friendly to the Friars, until they began to oppose him on matters of doctrine. Then he turned upon them with an envenomed tongue. Still, in his bitterest denunciations of them, Wiclif was unable to bring against them any definite charge of immorality. "It was probably," says Professor Little, "the glaring contrast between the lofty claims of the Friars and their actual life, rather than any inferiority in their morality as compared with the secular

priests, which exposed them to the bitterest denunciations and taunts of the reformers. The mendicants were far more in sympathy with the poor than were the endowed monks, and possessed far more than the parish priests the confidence of the people. Wiclif recognised this fact and lamented it.”<sup>1</sup>

At the dissolution the observant Friars were among the most strenuous opponents of the King's policy. True to the spirit of their Order, they protested strongly against the divorce proceedings. As a result, many of them were cast into prison, and the Minister-Provincial, John Forest, was burned to death. The rest were dispersed. Of the less observant Friars, the majority seem to have bowed their heads to fate with little or no protest. And thus the English province, established by Agnellus of Pisa by command of St. Francis himself, came to an end.

In the time of Mary I. the Friars returned to establish canonical communities, but only for awhile. Under Elizabeth they were again dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Grey Friars in Oxford*, chap. vi.

persed, but they remained in the country as missionaries, scattered up and down the land, throughout the penal days. The last of these missionary Friars was alive when the Capuchin Friars in 1850 again established themselves in England and began to live in canonical communities. The first Franciscan community under the new order of things was formed at Pantasaph in North Wales in 1852. Since that date the Friars have increased in number, so that at present they have no less than fifteen houses in England and one in Scotland. As of old, most of these communities are situated in the poorest parts of our large towns.

So it is that the Friars are once again in the land. They wear the same habit to-day as their brethren of old; they observe the same Rule; they pursue the same ideal; they have the same mission. And the history of this second coming of the Friars, if ever it is written, will have a striking resemblance to the history of the first coming, narrated in the *Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston*. In this

modern chronicle it will be told how two Friars came and settled down in one of the poor suburbs of London, trusting to the charity of others for food and shelter, and how before building a dwelling for themselves they began to build a church and school, and how for the building, one of these Friars who, like St. Francis himself, was the son of a wealthy Italian merchant, and had renounced his inheritance to become a Friar, went to Catholic Belgium to collect funds. And lest any of the money should be diverted from its proper purpose, the Friar went to the master of the boat in which he crossed the Channel, and asked to be allowed to work his way over. "My father," said the seaman, "you will help us more by your prayers than by your hands." Upon this foundation of Franciscan simplicity arose one of the most successful missions in the midst of London poor. Six years later this Friar was sent to Canada. There in the city of Toronto he lived for nine months in poverty, not unlike that of the first Friars of the Portiuncula, serving the people by day and spending most of his nights in prayer.

One night he was called out to attend a dying man. It was in the middle of March, and the snow was falling. Three days later the Friar died of pneumonia. As his body lay in the church awaiting burial, the people crowded in to gaze once more upon the face of the Friar, who in nine months had won their hearts and gained the reputation of a saint. Thirty years afterwards, when his coffin was opened and his body was found untouched by the grave, the people saw only a confirmation of their belief. In Louis of Lavagna the Friars had a leader worthy of Agnellus of Pisa.<sup>1</sup>

And now, reader, I conclude. If in this essay I have helped you to realise something of the Friar's life, it may be that my labour will have an interest to you beyond that of the passing hour. It may help you to realise that the Franciscan movement was not a merely evanescent phenomenon in history, but a formative influence in the history of Christendom. In

<sup>1</sup> Some account of this saintly Friar's coming to England and his subsequent career will be found in the monthly periodical, *Franciscan Annals*, vol. xix.



St. Francis of Assisi we have a classical presentment of Christian life and character. But, as we have already remarked, St. Francis cannot be rightly understood apart from his Order or from that legitimate development of his ideas to which the Order witnesses. Within the sphere of its proper development, the Order is the historical extension of the Saint's personality. Hence, they who would appreciate the Saint must appreciate the Friars.

\* \* \* \* \*

The present translation of Eccleston's *Chronicle* is made principally from the text edited by Brewer in the Rolls series; but I have had before me also the edition published in *Analecta Franciscana*, vol. i., by the Franciscan Fathers of Quaracchi, Florence.

Four manuscript copies of the text are known to exist—a mutilated manuscript in the Chapter Library at York, and a fragment beginning with the ninth chapter in the Cotton Collection at the British Museum. From these two manuscripts Brewer edited his text. Another frag-

ment, that of Lamport House, was edited by Howlett in *Monumenta Franciscana II*. It contains most of the chapters wanting in the Cotton manuscript. A fourth copy, unknown to Brewer or Howlett, has been unearthed by Professor Little, at Thirlestane House, Cheltenham.

A critical edition of the original text is much needed. It is evident that some of the incidents related are interpolations by a later hand. Those incidents which seem to me evident interpolations, I have taken out of the text and put into an appendix.

Finally, it may interest the reader to know that as far as this book represents my own thought, it has received the approbation of the Superiors of the Franciscan Order in England.



## OF THE COMING OF THE FRIARS MINOR INTO ENGLAND.

BY THOMAS OF ECCLESTON.

**I**N the sweetness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Brother Thomas wishes his well-beloved father, Brother Simon of Esseby, the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

Every worthy man ought to judge of his own life by the example of his betters, for oftentimes example will touch the heart when words fail. Therefore that you may have something of your own wherewith to encourage your beloved sons; and that they also who have renounced so many and such great things, nay, even themselves, for the sake of entering into our State and our Order—that they, too, when they read or hear of the wonderful things done in other Orders, may have something whereby they will be no less edified in their own vocation; and that, moreover, they may give unfailing thanks to Him, the sweet Jesus who has called them: therefore, Father Beloved in the sweet Jesus, I dedicate to you these chronicles which it has been my joy to gather together from the lips of my beloved fathers and brothers during twenty-five years: to the honour of Him in Whom God the Father is well pleased, the most sweet Christ, our Lord and God.

## CHAPTER I.

### OF THE FIRST COMING OF THE FRIARS MINOR.

**I**N the year of the Lord 1224, in the time of the Lord Pope Honorius (in the same year, that is, in **A.D. 1224.** which the Rule of the blessed Francis was **Arrival of** by him confirmed),<sup>1</sup> and in the eighth year **the Friars.** of the Lord King Henry, son of John, on the Tuesday after the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin,<sup>2</sup> which that year fell upon a Sunday, the Friars Minor first arrived in England, landing at Dover. They were four clerics and five lay-brethren.

**Agnellus** The clerics were these: first, Brother **of Pisa.** Agnellus of Pisa, who was in deacon's orders and about thirty years of age. He had been chosen by the blessed Francis to go to England as Minister-Provincial, in the General Chapter immediately preceding. At that time he was custos of Paris, and had there borne himself with such discretion that both with the brethren and with seculars he was much esteemed as a man of notable sanctity.

<sup>1</sup> Honorius III. confirmed the Rule on November 29th, 1223.

<sup>2</sup> September 8th; consequently the Friars arrived on September 10th, not September 11th, as Brewer states in his Summary.

The second was Brother Richard of Ingworth,<sup>1</sup> an Englishman by birth, who was both priest and preacher; and more advanced in age.

**Richard of Ingworth.**

He was the first of the brethren to preach to the people on this side of the Alps. In course of time, during the ministry of Brother John Parenti of happy memory,<sup>2</sup> he was sent as Minister-Provincial to Ireland; for he had already been Vicar to Brother Agnellus in England when the said Brother Agnellus went to the General Chapter whereat **A.D. 1230.** was made the translation of the relics of Saint Francis, and had during this time given a noble example of exceeding sanctity. But when he had completed the term of his ministry, in all things faithful and acceptable before God, he was freed in General Chapter, by Brother Albert of happy memory, from all office amongst the brethren, and, burning with zeal for the faith, he went to Syria, and there slept in peace.

The third was Brother Richard of Devon, also an Englishman. He was an acolyth and a mere youth.

Many examples did he leave us of his stout-heartedness and obedience. For after having travelled by obedience through many provinces, he dwelt at a place called Romehale and abode

**Richard of Devon.**

<sup>1</sup> He is also styled Brother Richard of Kingthorp in the synopsis of Eccleston, printed by Brewer from Leland's *Collectanea*; elsewhere Brewer suggests *Intworth*.

<sup>2</sup> John Parenti was elected Minister-General in 1227, and continued in office until 1233, according to the best accounts.

there continuously for fifteen years, worn out by frequent low fevers.

The fourth was Brother William of Esseby,<sup>1</sup> who was but a novice in the caperone of probation.<sup>2</sup> He also was an Englishman and a youth. In the discharge of various offices he suffered much without blame, the spirit of Jesus Christ constantly ministering unto him, and he left us many examples of humility and poverty, of charity and meekness, of obedience and patience and of all perfection. Thus, when Brother Gregory the Minister of France asked him whether he would be willing to go to England, he replied that he did not know. At which reply the Minister wondered, until Brother William said that the reason why he did not know was that his will was not his own but the Minister's, and so whatever the Minister willed he willed.

Brother William of Nottingham also gives testimony to his entire obedience. For when he gave him the choice of a place in which to dwell, Brother William of Esseby replied that whatever place the Minister was pleased to assign would please him. And because he was especially endowed with a most attractive and willing gentleness, he gained the affection of many seculars for the Order. Moreover, he led many worthy persons of different degrees of dignity, rank, and age into the way of salvation, and in many of them he

<sup>1</sup> Ashby?

<sup>2</sup> The caperone is the distinguishing dress of novices in the Order.

demonstrated beyond doubt how the sweet Jesus can work wonders, and by means of grasshoppers overcome giants.<sup>1</sup>

Now the lay-brethren were these : Brother Henry,<sup>2</sup> by birth a Lombard, who, because of his sanctity and remarkable discretion, was afterwards made  
**Henry the** Guardian of London. Having completed  
**Lombard.** his course of labour in England, and the number of the brethren being already increased, he returned into his own country.

The second was Brother Lawrence, who was born at Beauvais. He in the early days of the Province worked according to the Rule in unceasing  
**Lawrence** labours. Then he went back to the blessed  
**of Beauvais.** Francis, whom he did frequently see, and he was found worthy of the consolation of conversing with him. At length our holy Father generously gave him his own tunic, and, with a most sweet blessing, sent him back again rejoiced to England. After many more labours, and, as I think, through the merits of our holy Father, he came to the haven of rest, London, where he now is, being stricken down with a desperate sickness, and looking forward to the end of so long a weariness.

The third lay - brother was Brother  
**William of** William of Florence, who, after the arrival  
**Florence.** of the brethren, quickly returned to France.  
**Melioratus.** The fourth was Melioratus.

<sup>1</sup> See Numbers xiii. 33.

<sup>2</sup> De Ceruise or Treviso (Brewer).



The fifth, Brother James from beyond the Alps, who  
 James. was as yet but a novice in the caperone of probation.

These nine having then been charitably conveyed  
 across to England by the monks of Fécamp and  
 cordially provided for in their necessities,  
 Arrival at on arriving at Canterbury sojourned for  
 Canterbury. two days at the priory of the Holy Trinity.

Then four of them at once set off for London, namely, Brother Richard of Ingworth, Brother Richard of Devon, Brother Henry, and Brother Melioratus. The other five went to the Priests' Hospice, where they remained until they found for themselves a dwelling.

And this happened shortly afterwards, when they were given a small chamber at the back of a schoolhouse, where from day to day they remained

Manner of almost continuously shut up. But when  
 life there. the scholars had gone home in the evening

the brethren went into the schoolhouse, and there made a fire and sat near it. And sometimes at the

evening conference they would put on the

Their fire a small pot in which were the dregs of  
 poverty. beer, and they would dip a cup into the

pot and drink in turn, each speaking meanwhile some word of edification.<sup>1</sup> One who merited to be a com-

<sup>1</sup> On fasting days it was the custom of the Friars to meet together in the evening for a spiritual conference (*collatio*) instead of taking supper, and those who wished were allowed to have something to drink.

panion and participator in this unblemished simplicity and holy poverty has testified that at times the beer was so thick that when the pot was to be put on the fire they had to put in water, and so drank rejoicing.

In like manner, at Salisbury, it frequently happened that the brethren had but the dregs of beer to drink, and this they drank with much merriment and joy at the hour of conference around the kitchen fire, and he esteemed himself fortunate who could in a friendly way seize the cup from another.

At Shrewsbury it was the same at the first coming of the brethren thither, as Brother Martin, an old man who began the house there, would tell with glee.

In those days so strictly did the brethren avoid contracting debts, that hardly in extreme necessity

**How they avoided contracting debts.** would they become debtors. It happened once, however, that Brother Agnellus, with Brother Solomon the Guardian of London,

wished to audit the accounts of the brethren of London, to see what were their expenses during one term of the year, and he found that the expenses had largely increased in spite of their penury. Whereupon he threw from him the account books and bills, and, striking his face, exclaimed, "They have got the better of me!" And never again would he audit the accounts.

Another time it happened that two of the brethren came to one of our houses, and they were much troubled in spirit. Now there being no beer in the

house, the Guardian, with the advice of the elders, sent out for a measure of beer on credit. Nevertheless the brethren of the house who were with the guests would not drink of it, but only pretended to drink, out of charity.

Until the time when the Order was regularly established the brethren were accustomed to have an evening conference every day, at which they drank, those who wished, in common;<sup>1</sup> and afterwards, in due course, they held the chapter.<sup>2</sup> Nor were they restricted from taking various dishes, nor even from wine. Nevertheless in many places they would not accept the portions of fish or flesh-meat which were offered them, except on three days in the week. In the convent of London itself, in the time of the Minister-Provincial, Brother William of happy memory, and of Brother Hugh the Guardian, I have seen the brethren drink beer of such sourness that some preferred to drink water, and I have seen them eat bread which the people call *torta*. Nay, for want of bread I have often eaten spelt, even in company with the said Minister-Provincial and guests in the hospice.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was considered a mark of immortification to take drink except at the fixed times.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* the local chapter of the community.

<sup>3</sup> These last two paragraphs are both marked "Incidens" in Howlett's fragment; but Brewer, following the York MS., has omitted the word. The paragraphs marked "Incidens" seem to have been added by a later hand.

## CHAPTER II.

### OF THE FIRST DISPERSION OF THE BRETHREN.

**N**OW when the four brethren whom I have before named arrived in London, they went unto the Friars Preachers, and by them were kindly received. With them they remained for fifteen days, eating and drinking what these set before them as though they were members of the family. Afterwards they rented a house in Cornhill, and made for themselves little cells, filling in the walls with dried grass. In this simplicity they continued until the following summer, having not even a chapel of their own; for they had not as yet the privilege of erecting altars and celebrating the divine mysteries in their dwellings.

But just before the feast of All Saints,<sup>1</sup> and before Brother Agnellus had come up to London, Brother Richard of Ingworth and Brother Richard of Devon went on to Oxford, and there in like manner were received as brethren by the Friars Preachers. They ate in their refectory and slept in their dormitory for eight days, as though they belonged

<sup>1</sup> November 1st.

to the convent. At the end of this time they obtained a house in the parish of St. Ebbe, and there they dwelt without a chapel until the following summer. Here the sweet Jesus sowed the grain of mustard seed which was afterwards to become greatest among herbs.

From Oxford Brother Richard of Ingworth and Brother Richard of Devon went on to Northampton, and were taken into the hospice. They afterwards rented a house in the parish of St. Giles, where the first Guardian was Brother Peter, a Spaniard, who wore an iron breast-plate next to his flesh, and in other ways gave evidences of perfection.

The first Guardian of Oxford was Brother William of Esseby, who, being as yet a novice, was now given the habit of profession. The first Guardian of Cambridge was Brother Thomas of Spain. The first Guardian of Lincoln was Brother Henry Misericorde, a lay-brother.

Now it was Sir John Travers who first received the brethren at Cornhill, and let them a house; and the Guardian was a certain Lombard, a lay-brother, who now began for the first time to learn letters, sitting up at night in the church of St. Peter at Cornhill. Later on he was named Vicar of the English Province, whilst Brother Agnellus was away at a General Chapter; his socius<sup>1</sup> at this time being Brother

<sup>1</sup> A "socius" is an official companion and coadjutor.

Richard of Ingworth. But he was unable to bear so much dignity. Demoralised by honours, he became a stranger unto himself, and at length miserably apostatised from the Order.

Well worthy to be recorded is it that in the second year of the ministry of Brother Peter, the fifth A.D. 1251. Provincial-Minister of England, that is to say, in the thirty-second year since the coming of the brethren into England, there were in the English Province forty-nine houses, and the number of brethren dwelling therein was one thousand two hundred and forty-two.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These last two paragraphs are each marked "Incidens" in Howlett's fragment.

## CHAPTER III.

### OF THE NOVICES WHO CAME TO THE ORDER.

**W**HEN the brethren who first arrived in England had thus separated and had gone to their different places, there came some, led by the spirit of Jesus, seeking admission into the Order. Of these the first to be admitted was a youth of good

parts and of remarkable elegance of person, to wit, Brother Solomon. He used

to tell me how, when he was a novice, he was appointed procurator of the community, and one day he came to the house of his sister to beg an alms. She, bringing him some bread, turned away her face and exclaimed: "Cursed be the hour in which I have ever seen thee." But he received the bread rejoicing and went his way. So strictly did he abide by the Rule of most needy poverty, which he had taken to

himself, that when at times, for the sake of some sick brother, he would bring in in his

capereone wheaten flour, or salt, or a few figs, or an armful of wood for the fire, he took diligent heed not to accept or retain anything beyond the measure of the most extreme necessity. Now it

occasionally happened that he himself was so starved with cold that he believed himself nigh unto death; and the brethren having not wherewith to warm him, holy charity suggested to them a remedy; for all the brethren gathered together and huddled about him, and so revived him.<sup>1</sup> When he was to be

**Is ordained  
acolyth.**

promoted to the Order of Acolyths he was sent to the venerable Father the Archbishop

Stephen of holy memory, and presented by one of the elder brethren. The Archbishop received him most graciously, and ordained him under this title: "Let Brother Solomon, of the Order of the Apostles, come forward." (This incident have I related that it might be known in what reverence wise men held the spirituality of the brethren in the first days.) But

**How he  
walked to  
Canterbury  
barefoot in  
the snow,  
and injures  
his foot.**

when they had eaten at the Archbishop's table, the brethren returned barefoot to Canterbury in snow exceedingly deep and fearful to behold. After this Brother Solomon got an infirmity in one of his feet, by which he was stricken down in London

for two years, being scarcely able to move unless he were carried. During this time he was found worthy to be visited by Brother Jordan of holy memory, Master-General of the whole Order of Preachers, who said to him: "Brother, be not ashamed if the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ leads thee to Himself on foot."

<sup>1</sup> "Convenerunt siquidem omnes fratres circa ipsum, suis sinibus, sicut porcis mos est, eum comprimendo foverunt."



For a long time therefore did he lay in his cell, and was unable to hear holy Mass, since the brethren did not celebrate in the house, but went to hear Mass and to celebrate in the parish church. At length he became so desperately ill that in the opinion of the surgeons the foot must be cut off; but when the knife was brought and the foot was uncovered, a corrupt matter came out of it, and this gave some hope that it would heal. So the surgeons' harsh decision was for a time put aside. In the meantime Brother Solomon conceived the hope that if he were taken to the shrine of St. Eloy he would regain both his foot and his health. Therefore when Brother Agnellus arrived he commanded that in whatever way it could conveniently be done, Brother Solomon should without delay be taken to the shrine of St. Eloy beyond the seas.<sup>1</sup>

He visits  
a shrine  
beyond the  
sea and is  
cured.

So it came to pass, and the faith of Brother Solomon did not fail him; for he afterwards so far recovered as to be able to walk without a stick, and to celebrate Mass, and become Guardian of London, and general confessor to the whole city. Yet because he had oftentimes besought the most sweet Jesus that he might be cleansed from his sins in the present life, there was sent him an infirmity which affected the spine, so that he became hunched-back and bent; moreover, the sweet Jesus sent him the dropsy and bleeding hæmorrhoids until his death. At

<sup>1</sup> At Noyon, in Flanders, where the body of St. Eloy was kept until the Revolution.

last, on the day before his soul went forth unto his Lord, he was cast into such sorrow of heart, that all the sufferings he had hitherto borne seemed nothing in comparison with this agony: nor could he tell why he sorrowed. Therefore he called to him three of the brethren with whom he was more intimate, and telling them of his agony of soul, pleaded that

His holy  
death.

they would in all earnestness pray for his welfare. Now whilst these brethren were persevering together in prayer, there appeared to Brother Solomon the most sweet Jesus with the holy apostle Peter, standing by his bed and gazing upon him. Brother Solomon, as soon as he knew that it was the Saviour, cried out: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord; have mercy upon me." And the Lord Jesus replied: "Because thou didst always ask Me to afflict thee in this present life, and so cleanse thee, I have sent thee this suffering; the more so that thou didst leave thy first charity, and didst not, as became thy calling, bring forth worthy fruits of penance; and that thou didst spare the rich in enjoining them penance."<sup>1</sup> And the blessed Peter added: "Moreover, know that thou didst grievously sin in thy judgment of Brother John of Chester, who lately died. Pray now that the Lord give thee such a death as he had." Then Brother Solomon cried out: "Have mercy upon me, most sweet Lord; have mercy upon me, sweet Jesus!" Who, smiling, looked upon Brother Solomon with so gentle

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xi.

a countenance that all his preceding anguish immediately vanished, and with singular joy he was filled with a most certain assurance of his salvation. Quickly he called to him the brethren, and told them what he had seen, whereat they were not a little consoled.<sup>1</sup>

The second brother to be received by Brother Agnellus was Brother William of London, who had for some time been dumb, but recovered his speech at Barking through the merits of St. Ethelburga, as he himself told me. He, too, was admitted to the habit in London at the time when the brethren had neither chapel nor ground. He had been of the household of the Lord Justiciary of England, Hubert de Burgh, although he was a layman; he was, moreover, famous for his skill in carving at table.

The third was Brother Joyce of Cornhill, a cleric. He was born in the very city of London, and was a man of good parts—pious, noble, and refined. After having borne many labours here, he went to live in Spain, and there died happily.

The fourth was Brother John, a cleric. He was

<sup>1</sup> The following passage has been evidently interpolated in this place: It is worthy of record that during the time the brethren dwelt at Cornhill the devil appeared visibly to Brother Gilbert of Vyz, as he was sitting alone, and said: "Thinkest thou to escape me? Behold! this thou shalt have." And he threw at him a handful of lice, and vanished.

about eighteen years of age, of good parts and excellent manners; but he very quickly completed the course of this present life and went to the Lord Jesus Christ. He it was who merrily persuaded the priest Sir Philip, who was suffering from his teeth, to send bread and beer to the Friars Minor, promising that the Lord Jesus would cure him; and so it came to pass. Shortly afterwards, therefore, they both gave themselves to the Order and took the habit.

The fifth was this Brother Philip, a Londoner by birth and, as I have said, a priest. He was afterwards appointed Guardian of Bruges, and as a preacher gained many souls to Christ. At the end he was sent to Ireland, and there departed to the Lord.

After these came certain Masters of the University, who added to the fame of the brethren. One of these was Brother Walter de Burgh, concerning whom a brother had a wonderful vision; for he saw the Lord Jesus descending from heaven, Who offered to Brother Walter a scroll on which was written: "Thy harvest is not here, but elsewhere." To this brother was revealed the deception of a certain religious woman, who had deluded a certain prudent brother so far that he committed her visions to writing. Now Brother Agnellus did not believe in the visions, and he enjoined the brethren

to pray that God would make clear to him a certain matter about which he was much concerned. And behold, that very night Brother Walter saw in vision a doe run quickly up the brow of a high mountain, and two big dogs followed her and turned her down into the valley, and there strangled her. Whereupon he ran to the place where he thought he would find the doe, and found nothing but a small vessel full of blood. This vision he related to Brother Agnellus, who judged that the woman was a hypocrite, and he sent unto her therefore two discreet brethren, who at length brought her to a confession of the truth, and she confessed that she had invented all she had told.

Another Master was Brother Richard, a Norman, who was once asked by the aforesaid Brother Walter for a word of edification; and after long  
**Richard the** deliberation within himself, he replied:  
**Norman.** "Whosoever wishes to be at peace, let him hold his peace."

Then came Master Vincent of Coventry, and he not long afterwards, the grace of Jesus assisting, prevailed upon his brother, Master Henry, to enter  
**Vincent of** also. They were received on the day of the  
**Coventry.** conversion of St. Paul, together with Master Adam of Oxford of holy memory, and Sir William of York.

**Adam of** Master Adam of Oxford<sup>1</sup> was famous  
**Oxford.** throughout the whole world. He had made

<sup>1</sup> Also styled Adam de Exonia.

a vow that whatsoever was asked of him for the love of the Blessed Virgin he would grant, and **His vow to the Blessed Virgin.** this he told to a certain woman, an anchoress, with whom he was acquainted. Now she revealed the secret to her friends, namely, a monk of Reading, and certain others of the Order of the Cistercians, and to a Friar Preacher, telling them that they should gain such a great man for their Order; but she did not wish that the Friars Minor should have him. But the Blessed Virgin brought it to pass that none of them should ask anything of Master Adam for love of her, even when they got into his company, but always they deferred their request until another time.

But one night Master Adam dreamt that he was crossing a bridge where certain men were **His dream.** setting snares to catch him. With great difficulty he escaped them, and found himself in a most pleasant spot. But just as divine Providence had delivered him from the others, he casually came upon the Friars Minor; and William de Colville the elder, a man of sanctity, spoke, and, amongst other words, said these: "Beloved Master, for the love of the Mother of God, enter our Order and raise up our simplicity." And at once Master Adam gave way as though he had heard the Mother of God herself speak.

He was at that time the companion of Master Adam de Marisco and in his service, whom also, by

the grace of God, he induced to enter the Order not long afterwards. For one night Brother Adam de Marisco dreamt that they came to a castle, and above the gates was an image of the crucifix, which all who passed through the gates must kiss. Now Brother Adam of Oxford went through first after kissing the crucifix, and the other Brother Adam, kissing the crucifix, followed. But the first, at once discovering the stairs in the tower, ran up swiftly and was soon out of sight. The other, following, cried out "Not so fast!" But never again was the first seen. The meaning of this vision afterwards became clear to all the brethren in England. For Brother Adam of Oxford, after entering the Order, went to Pope Gregory and, according to his own wish, was sent by him to preach to the Saracens. He died at Barlete before the death of Brother Adam de Marisco, and it is said was renowned for miracles. Thus did Adam de Marisco enter the Order at Worcester, from love of most high poverty.

After these came Brother John of Reading, Abbot of Osney, who left us an example of all perfection. Next after him came Brother Rufus, who was well known both at Paris and Oxford.

There came also certain knights, to wit, Sir Richard Gobion, Sir Giles de Merk, Sir Thomas, a Spaniard, and Sir Henry de Walpole.

Concerning their entrance into the Order our Lord the King<sup>1</sup> afterwards remarked: "If ye Friars had been discreet in receiving brethren, if ye had not procured privileges to the injury of your fellow-men, and especially had ye not been importunate in questing, ye might have ruled over princes."

As the number of the brethren thus increased and their sanctity became known, the devotion of the people towards them increased likewise, and they became anxious to provide the brethren with suitable dwellings. At

**The Friars  
obtain  
houses and  
grounds.**

Canterbury Sir Alexander, Master of the Priests' Hospice, made over to them a plot of ground and built them a chapel sufficiently spacious and becoming for the time; and because the brethren would receive nothing as their

**At Canter-  
bury.**

own, it was given to the city and the brethren were allowed to live there at the will of the citizens. Most especially, however, were the brethren cared for by Sir Simon of Longton, Archdeacon of Canterbury, and Sir Henry of Sandwich, and by the noble countess, the Lady Inclusa de Baginton,<sup>2</sup> who in all things cared for them as a mother for her sons. By a wise use of her influence she moreover obtained for them, in an astonishing manner, the favour of princes and prelates.

At London the brethren were befriended by Sir John

**At London.**

Iwyn, who bought them a plot of ground and gave it to the city, but piously assigned

<sup>1</sup> Dominus Roy.

<sup>2</sup> Hackington? (Howlett).



the use of it to the brethren at the will of the citizens.<sup>1</sup> He himself afterwards entered the Order as a lay-brother and led a most penitential and devout life. Sir Joyce Fitz-Piers added to the ground. His own son, a man of good parts, afterwards devoutly entered the Order, and still more devoutly persevered unto the end. The chapel was built by Sir William Joyner,<sup>2</sup> at his own cost. He also gave at various times upwards of two hundred pounds towards other buildings, and until his death he continued unweariedly in spiritual relationship with the brethren, bestowing upon them frequent benefactions. For the building of the infirmary Sir Peter de Helyland left one hundred pounds at his death. The laying of the waterpipe was chiefly due to the donations of Sir Henry de Fowie, and to a young man of good address, Salekin de Basing,<sup>3</sup> increased, however, by the King's ample munificence. Many other and ever-increasing gifts have I seen in my own time in London, both as regards buildings and books and additions to the ground and for the relieving of other needs—gifts to be admired by mortal men, and provided for the brethren by the most sweet Jesus in order that they,

<sup>1</sup> This plot of ground was in the parish of St. Nicholas in the Shambles, and was conveyed by deed, dated in the 9th year of Henry III. (vide *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London*. Preface, Camden Society). John Iwyn afterwards entered the Order as a lay-brother. (Prima Fundatio FF. Min. Londoniæ.)

<sup>2</sup> Lord Mayor in A.D. 1239.

<sup>3</sup> Eccleston has omitted to mention William the Tailor, who began the waterway (vide *Chronicle of Grey Friars*).

more than others, should love and honour Him now and in eternity.

At Oxford the brethren were received by Robert le Mercer, who let them a house wherein many learned

**At Oxford.** bachelors and many nobles took the habit.

Afterwards they rented a house from Richard le Mulliner on the ground where they now are, but within a year he gave the ground and house to the city for the use of the brethren. The ground, however, was exceedingly narrow and of no great length.

At Cambridge the brethren were at first received by the burgesses, who made over to them an old

**At Cambridge.** synagogue near the prison. The neighbourhood of the prison, however, was intolerable

to the brethren, since both they and the gaolers had to use the same entrance; so our Lord the King gave them ten marks, with which they were able to buy out the lease from the court of exchequer. Then they built a chapel so very humble that one carpenter built it in one day, and in one day set up fourteen bundles of planks. So on the feast of St. Lawrence,<sup>1</sup> though there were as yet but three brethren, namely, Brother William of Esseby and Brother Hugh of Bugeton, both clerics, and a novice named Brother Elias, who was so lame that he had to be carried into

**How the Friars sang the office solemnly.** the choir, they sang the office solemnly according to note, and the novice wept so much that the tears ran freely down his

<sup>1</sup> August 10th.

face. Now this novice afterwards died a most holy death at York, and he appeared to Brother William of Esseby at Northampton, and when Brother William asked him how he was, he replied, "I am well; pray for me."

At Shrewsbury the King gave the brethren a plot of ground; but the church was built by a burgess, Richard Pinde, and the other offices by a burgess named Lawrence. But Brother William, the minister, being zealous for poverty, ordered the stone walls in the dormitory to be removed and mud walls put in their stead, which was done by the brethren with admirable meekness and at great cost.

**At Shrewsbury.**

**Brother William removes the stone walls.**

## CHAPTER IV.

### OF THE PRIMITIVE PIETY OF THE BRETHREN.

**T**HE brethren at that time, having the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit, served the Lord not so much by the observance of human constitutions as by the free outpouring of their piety, being content with their Rule and the very few statutes which were made the same year that the Rule was confirmed.

The first statute made by Saint Francis after the Rule was confirmed, was this (as we are told by Brother Albert of holy memory), that the brethren when they eat with seculars should not take more than three mouthfuls of food continuously, that the holy Gospel might be observed,<sup>1</sup> for a rumour had reached Saint Francis that the brethren ate voraciously.

They were accustomed to keep silence until the hour of terce, and so assiduous were they in prayer that there was scarcely an hour in the night when some one of them was not at prayer in the oratory. Moreover, on the

<sup>1</sup> A reference to Matthew vi. 25.

principal feasts they chanted with such fervour that their vigils sometimes lasted the whole night, and although there might be but three or four **Their piety.** brethren, or at the most six, they sang the office solemnly according to note. Such, too, was their simplicity and purity that did any one of them suffer unwittingly any shame he confessed it before all the brethren in the chapel. There grew up amongst them a most religious custom never to swear to anything but simply to say, "Know that it is so." Were any one accused by his superior or companion, he at once replied, "Mea culpa!"<sup>1</sup> and frequently prostrated. Whereupon Brother Jordan of holy memory, Master-General of the Friars Preachers, has related how the devil once appeared to him and said that this "Mea culpa!" snatched from his grasp whatever hope he had of getting the Friars Minor, since whenever one offended against another he always acknowledged his fault to the other.

Yet the brethren at all times were so joyful and merry amongst themselves that even when they were silent their countenances seemed to laugh. **Their joyful-** Whence it happened that at Oxford, where **ness.** the young brethren were frequently given to much laughter, it was enjoined on one of them to take the discipline<sup>2</sup> as often as he laughed. Now one day he neither restrained his laughter nor took the

<sup>1</sup> "'Tis my fault!"

<sup>2</sup> The discipline is the little scourge used for self-mortification.

discipline. The following night, therefore, he dreamt that the whole community were standing according to their custom in the choir, and as usual some of the brethren were laughing, when behold! the crucifix which stood at the door of the choir turned towards them, as though it were alive, and said, "They are the sons of Core who at the time of divine office laugh or sleep."<sup>1</sup> It seemed to him also that the figure on the crucifix strove to free its hands as though wishing to come down and go away, but the Guardian immediately went up and made the nails fast so that the figure could not come down. When this dream was related to the brethren they were terrified, and henceforth bore themselves more seriously and without overmuch laughter.

So jealous were they for the truth that they would hardly permit themselves to speak in hyperbole, nor would they conceal their faults even when they knew that they would be punished did they confess. When they were sent to new places or were told to abide in the place they were already in they made no difficulty, nor in regard to any matter or place whatever, once they knew it was the superior's will. Whence it happened that brethren, noble by birth or in other ways, who were notable men in the world and most respected in the Order, would, without a murmur, allow themselves to be sent to places which

**Their love  
of truth.**

**Their  
obedience.**

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Numbers xvi.

in those days were simple wildernesses. This only, **Their love** in the sweetness of their souls, seemed to **for each** sadden them, that they should have to **other.** separate: wherefore the brethren would frequently accompany those who were sent away unto a far distance, and at parting tears of affection would show how they loved one another.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare Leg., 3 Soc., cap. xi.

## CHAPTER V.

OF THOSE WHO WERE SENT TO PREACH.

**A**LTHOUGH the brethren were in all things chiefly concerned for simplicity of life and purity of conscience, they nevertheless were so intent on acquiring a knowledge of Scripture and the scholastic courses that they did not hesitate to go daily to the theological schools, no matter how great the distance; and they went barefoot even in severe cold and deep mud. Wherefore after a time many of them, with the help of the Holy Ghost, were found worthy to be given the office of preacher.

**Their zeal  
for learning.**

**The first  
preachers.** The first of these was Brother Hugh de Baldoc of happy memory; then Brother Philip of Longton, and Brother William of Baldoc. Esseby. This last preached the Word of God both to the clergy and laity, and not only by word of mouth but by his manifest devotion.

But the entrance into the Order of Brother Haymo of Faversham caused the number of preachers to be greatly increased, and gave them influence and fame. For he was a priest and a celebrated preacher at the time he entered

**Brother  
Haymo of  
Faversham.**



the Order at Saint Deny's, and he entered, together with three other masters of the university, on a Good Friday. Now whilst Brother Haymo was yet in the world he had worn a hair shirt even to his knees, and in many other ways was an example of penance; from which cause he became at length so weak and delicate that he could scarcely eat anything except meat which was roasted, nor could he take hot foods.

**His vision.** Now it happened that he had a vision. He

was at Faversham, and was praying in the church before the crucifix when behold there was let down from heaven a cord, and he took hold of it and was drawn up by it to heaven. Afterwards, seeing the Friars Minor, and remembering his vision, he recovered his strength, and rising above himself, discreetly proposed to his fellow-master,

**Simon of Sandwich.** Simon of Sandwich, and to two other

famous masters, that he should say Mass, and whilst he celebrated they should all beseech the Lord Jesus Christ to make known to them what would be most conducive to their salvation. And as they prayed the life of the Friars Minor commended itself to them all at the same time; but for greater assurance they went to Brother Jordan of holy memory, the Master-General of the Friars Preachers, and put it on his conscience to give them faithfully his advice. And he, being truthfully inspired, confirmed them in their resolution. These four therefore betook themselves to the Minister-Provincial, Brother

Gregory of Naples, and by him were received at Saint Deny's on Good Friday, after Brother Haymo had preached from the text: "When the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion, we were like men comforted."<sup>1</sup> And they were clothed, to their great joy.

But on Easter Sunday Brother Haymo saw a great crowd of people in the parish church where the brethren heard Mass (for they themselves had not yet a chapel), and he told the Guardian, a lay-brother named Vincent, that if he might dare to do so, he would willingly preach to the people, lest any of them should communicate in mortal sin. The Guardian therefore, on the part of the Holy Ghost, commanded him to preach. Whereupon Brother Haymo preached so earnestly that many put off their communion till they had confessed to him. And he sat for three days in the church hearing confessions, and comforted the people not a little.

And so, as I have already said, after the brethren had come to England, Brother Haymo came also; and both in preaching and in disputations in the schools, and especially by securing the favour of prelates, he was very useful to the brethren in their primitive simplicity.

For so pleasant was his address and so eloquent was he, that even with those who were opposed to the

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxxv. 1, 2 (Vulgate).

Order he himself was popular and acceptable. Wherefore he was first appointed Guardian of Paris and afterwards Reader at Turin, Bologna, and Padua.

**Is sent as** Moreover he was sent by Pope Gregory as **Papal Legate** legate, together with Brother Ralph of to Greece.

Rheims of happy memory, to Vataztes, Emperor in Greece. He, too, it was who caused Brother Gregory of Naples, Minister of France, who lived at Paris, to be removed from the ministry on

**Brings** account of his demerits, and by a just  
**about the** judgment of God to be imprisoned; but  
**deposition of** those whom the Minister had unjustly  
**Brother** thrown into prison he set free. Moreover,  
**Gregory of** by the wonderful mercy of God he cast  
**Naples and** down Brother Elias, the Minister-General,  
**Brother**  
**Elias.**

because of the scandals which he wrought and the tyranny with which he pursued the more zealous brethren in the Order.<sup>1</sup> For Brother Haymo, having been appointed companion to the Minister of England, brought about that many of the provinces should appeal against Brother Elias, in the very presence of our father Pope Gregory. Alas! who will dare presume on his own merits, who will dare think himself safe, when he sees such men come to so great a fall! For in the University of Paris and amongst all the clergy of France who was comparable to Brother Gregory as a preacher and a ruler? Who

<sup>1</sup> "Zelatores Ordinis," the name given to those who were zealous for the primitive simplicity and poverty of the Order.

in the whole of Christendom was more agreeable in manners or more famous than Brother Elias? Nevertheless, the one merited to end his days in prison; the other, on account of his disobedience and apostasy incurred the excommunication of the Sovereign Pontiff. Both, however, repented at their last hour.

When Brother Haymo came to England there came also Brother William de Colville the elder, a man of great simplicity and exceeding charity, whose sister was afterwards cruelly murdered in the Cathedral at Chichester because of her chastity. For a certain youth, taken with her beauty, had long desired to meet her alone and seduce her; and when he could by no artifice lead her astray, he proved how wicked carnal love may be by killing her in the church. Indeed, with those who love according to the flesh it frequently happens that according to the measure with which they love at first they afterwards come to hate.

Now after this<sup>1</sup> many other distinguished brethren came to England, who were English by birth, but had entered the Order at Paris, whom, whilst I was yet in secular dress, I myself saw. There was Brother Nicholas Rufus, a reader of great merit, who, being zealous for the reformation of the Order, went afterwards with Brother Haymo to represent France in the appeal against Brother Elias

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the coming of Brother Haymo and William de Colville.

at the Papal Court. This Brother Nicholas related  
 Of a certain novice who suffered from thirst. that a certain novice once told him how he  
 had suffered from continual thirst, so that  
 he was unable to sleep at night; and there  
 appeared to him a handsome man, clothed  
 in the habit of the brethren, who commanded him to  
 rise and follow, which he did; and he was taken unto  
 a most pleasant place and into a most beautiful palace,  
 and given a most delightful drink. And his companion  
 said to him: "Brother, as often as thou art thirsty  
 come hither to me and I shall give thee to drink."  
 Then the novice asked him who he was, who replied  
 that he was Brother Francis. The novice, returning  
 to himself, never again suffered any temptation from  
 thirst, and being now awake he found himself much  
 refreshed and comforted.

At that time also came Brother Ralph de Rosa, who  
 because of the charm of his preaching was received  
 with great favour by our Lord the King of  
 Brother Ralph de Rosa. England. But his end proved how injurious  
 to God is the friendship of the world, and  
 how harmful to the simplicity of the Order of Friars  
 Minor it is to be uplifted by the favour of the great,  
 and to dwell constantly at the courts of princes.

Then came Brother Henry de Burford, who whilst  
 yet a novice and cantor to the brethren at  
 Brother Henry de Burford. Paris, composed during a meditation the  
 following verses against the temptations  
 which troubled him:—

"Qui Minor es, noli ridere, tibi quia soli  
 Convenit ut plores; jungas cum nomine mores:  
 Nomine tu Minor es, Minor actibus esto, labores  
 Perfer, et ingentem nunciat patientia mentem.  
 Nempe cor objurgat, per nam patientia purgat  
 Si quicquam facis, est siquis te corripit? is est,  
 Qui te custodit; non te, sed quod facis, ordit,  
 Quid tibi cum vili veste, cibs, quoque cubile?  
 Peccator certe, tu singula perdis aperte  
 Si mentitus eris factis quod veste fateris.  
 Umbra minoris erit, qui nulla re sua quærit."<sup>1</sup>

Now Brother Henry, because of his high character, afterwards was found worthy to be the special companion in England of four Ministers-General and four Provincials, and for a long time he was interpreter and preacher to the Patriarch of Antioch, when this prelate was legate in Lombardy. Afterwards he became penitentiary of our Lord Pope Gregory IX., Custos of Venice, and Vicar to the Custos of London.

<sup>1</sup> "Thou who art a Friar Minor, laugh not; for it becomes thee only to weep. A Minor in name, be a Minor in manners. Thou art a Minor by name; be, then, a Minor in deeds. Shirk not labour, and let thy patience prove the greatness of thy mind. Should thy heart reprove thee, then patience will cleanse thee, if perhaps thou art guilty. Is it that someone corrects thee? It is he who has charge over thee, and he hates, not thee, but what thou hast done. And what with thy coarse garment, food, and cell? Surely thou art a sinner, and wilt plainly lose everything if thy deeds belie what thy garment professes. He is the shadow of a Minor who seeks nothing as his own." The reader will bear in mind that Saint Francis called his brethren Minors because they were to consider themselves the least amongst men according to the Gospel (Matthew xxiii. 11, 12).

About the same time came Brother Henry de Reresby, who from being Vicar to the Custos of Oxford was appointed Minister of Scotland, but died before he could proceed thither. After his death he appeared to the Custos of Oxford, and said that if the brethren were not damned for that they expended more than they should upon their buildings, they would nevertheless be grievously punished; and he added: "If the brethren recite the divine office with devotion, they will be the sheep of the Apostles."

There came also Brother Martin de Barton who was found worthy frequently to see the blessed Francis. He was afterwards Vicar to the Minister of England, and bore himself well in many other offices. He related how at a certain General Chapter<sup>1</sup> there were five thousand brethren present, and the brethren, having built a house to accommodate the Chapter, the blessed Francis ordered it to be pulled down. Now Brother Martin's own brother in the flesh was the Seneschal of the Chapter, and on the part of the community pulled down the house.

Saint Francis once sent Brother Martin with a letter to the Minister and brethren of France, which letter he wrote with his own hand in the open air. And it was raining, but the rain did not wet Saint Francis. And he ordered the brethren when they

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated Chapter of Metz.

should receive the letter to sing the praises of the most Holy Trinity, saying: "Let us praise the Father and the Son with the Holy Ghost." That same day our Father preserved unhurt a brother who had fallen into a well, for as soon as he heard what had happened, he ran to the church and poured forth his prayers for him. Brother Martin also related how another brother was found unhurt who was praying in a church at Brixen on Christmas Day when there came a great earthquake, so that the stones gave way and the church fell. This earthquake had been predicted by Saint Francis, and in a letter written chiefly in the Latin tongue he had caused it to be announced by the brethren in all the schools of Bologna. It happened before the war of the Emperor Frederic and continued for forty days, so that every mountain in Lombardy was shaken.

Lastly came Brother Peter the Spaniard, who afterwards became Guardian of Northampton.

**Brother Peter the Spaniard.** He it was who wore an iron corselet for the overcoming of temptations of the flesh.

Now Brother Peter had in his convent a novice, who was tempted to leave the Order. At length with difficulty he persuaded the novice to go with him to the Minister. But as they went together on their way Brother Peter began to speak of the virtue of holy obedience, and lo! a wood-pigeon came and went before them on the way. The novice, whose name was Stephen, said to Brother Peter: "Father, if it be



as you say, command in virtue of obedience that I capture this wood-pigeon, and that it wait for me." Brother Peter did as he was asked, and the bird immediately stood still. Then the novice approached and laid hold of it and drew it here and there as he wished. Immediately all his temptation vanished, and God gave him another heart. He returned to Northampton and made his profession with the purpose of persevering to the end, and afterwards he became a famous preacher, as I myself can bear witness.

## CHAPTER VI.

### OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CUSTODIES.<sup>1</sup>

**T**HE brethren having increased from day to day both in merits and in numbers, and their houses being consequently multiplied, it seemed expedient that the province should be divided into custodies. This, therefore, was done at the first Provincial Chapter of London. Now each custody was remarkable for some singular note of sanctity. Thus in the Custody of London, governed by that Brother Gilbert to whom the Blessed Virgin appeared at the hour of death, there especially flourished the spirit of fervour, reverence, and devotion in the reciting of the divine office. The Custody of Oxford, presided over by Brother William of Esseby, was noted for its learning. The Custody of Cambridge, of which Brother Richard of Ingworth was the Custos, was particularly remarkable for its want of temporal

**Each Custody has its special mark of sanctity.**

**Devotion at London.**

**Learning at Oxford.**

<sup>1</sup> A custody is a division of a province. When a province becomes too large to be governed well by a Minister-Provincial it is divided into custodies, and each custody is governed by a custos, in subordination to the Minister.

goods, so much so that at the time of his first visitation of England Brother Albert of Pisa, as **Poverty at Cambridge.** he himself related, found the brethren of this custody to be without mantles.

In the Custody of York, presided over by Brother Martin de Barton, there was a great zeal for poverty, and it was not permitted that a greater **And at York.** number of brethren should dwell in any one place than could be sustained there by

questing without recourse to debts. The Custody of Salisbury, under Brother Stephen, was re- **Mutual love at Salisbury.** markable for mutual love. Brother Stephen himself was a man of great sweetness and cheerfulness and of exceeding charity and compassion, so that he would never allow anyone to be sad if he could by any means prevent him.

Now when he came to die and they brought him the Saving Host, he beheld in the Host the door by which he would enter into eternal life,<sup>1</sup> and singing with a loud voice the *Salve Regina*, died happily at Salisbury.

In the Custody of Worcester, over which Brother ———<sup>2</sup> of Leicester presided, there especially flourished the primitive simplicity; for this Brother **Simplicity at Worcester.** ——— a man of small body but large heart, always studied to observe the greatest sim-

<sup>1</sup> "Vidit ostium in hostia"—a reference to the verse, *O Salutaris Hostia, quæ cœli pandis ostium*, which occurs in the office of Corpus Christi.

<sup>2</sup> The name is omitted in the text.

plicity, and brought many simple persons into the Order. At length, with tears and a loud cry, he gave up his simple and holy soul into the hands of the Lord, dying at Worcester.

Now in the Custody of Oxford, of which Brother Peter was Custos for twelve years, the brethren did not use pillows until the time when **Austerity at Oxford.** Brother Albert was Minister. Wherefore

in the chapter Brother Albert remarked that it was unbecoming that the brethren should make little heaps on which to rest their heads; but the Custos replied that they knew sufficiently well how the brethren were carnal, and it was not expedient to tell them this. Neither did the brethren use sandals, unless they were sick or delicate, and then only with leave. Now it once happened that Brother Walter de Madeley of happy memory found a pair of sandals and put them on when he went to matins. And whilst he stood at matins it seemed to him that he was more comfortable than he was wont to be. But afterwards, when he went to bed and had fallen asleep, he dreamed that he was passing along a certain dangerous road that runs between Oxford and Bagley,<sup>1</sup> in Gloucestershire, where robbers were often found; and he had come down into a deep valley, when robbers came running out on either side crying with a loud voice, "Kill him! kill him!" Much frightened, Brother Walter told them that he was a Friar Minor,

<sup>1</sup> Boysaly.

but they replied, "Thou dost lie, for thou goest not unshod." And he, believing himself to be, as usual, barefooted, said, "Nay, but I am unshod," and there-upon confidently raised a foot. But in the robbers' presence he found himself shod in the aforesaid sandals. In great trouble of mind he then awoke, and, taking the sandals, threw them out into the garden.

## CHAPTER VII.

### OF THE COMMISSARIES SENT TO VISIT THE PROVINCE.

**A**FTER these things it happened that special visitors<sup>1</sup> were sent to England, and these, for matters concerning their visitations, held chapters.

**Brother William de Colville's Visitation.** Brother William de Colville the elder had, however, already been visitor to England, and had held his chapter at London during the ministry of Brother Agnellus. Now a chapel had been built for the brethren in London at the expense of Sir William Joyner, and he took the occasion of this chapter to celebrate the opening with a splendour to be remembered.

But now came Brother John Naverius, who for the first time brought over the explanation of the Rule according to the Lord Pope Gregory IX.

**Brother John Naverius.** On account of the Visitation, therefore, he assembled the brethren, even the novices, in great numbers, under Brother Agnellus at London, Leicester, and Bristol. At that time the brethren had

<sup>1</sup> A visitor is one sent in the name of the Minister-General to inspect the working of a province. Brother Elias, the Minister-General, endeavoured to use the visitors as agents for his own schemes.

so strict a conscience regarding the building of houses and the possession of pictures that the visitor acted with great severity because of the windows<sup>1</sup> in the chapel at Gloucester; moreover, he deprived a brother of his hood because he had decorated a pulpit with pictures, and inflicted the same penance upon the Guardian of the place because he had permitted the pictures to be painted.

The third visitor came as the delegate of Brother Elias, the Minister-General during the ministry of Brother Albert. He was Brother Wygmund, a German, and a man very famous for his knowledge of law and noted for the integrity of his conduct. He was, moreover, very familiar with the Lord Cardinal Otho, at that time legate in England.

Now he had received very strict and cunning instructions from the Minister-General, especially that any brother should be *ipso facto* excommunicated who should in any way conceal the province. aught from him, or make known to others what he should say to the brother, from which excommunication none could absolve save the visitor himself. Moreover, all accusations were to be taken to the Minister-General; wherefore there arose amongst the brethren such trouble of mind as had never before been known in the Order, for the brethren, being

<sup>1</sup> Presumably because they were decorated.

assembled in chapter at London, Southampton, Gloucester, and Oxford, and great numbers coming thereunto, they began to accuse each other and even to suspect seculars who were not at the chapter, so that the chapter was protracted beyond measure. Thus suddenly there arose throughout the province an intolerable tempest. The Visitation being at length

**The Friars appeal against him.** somehow concluded, a Provincial Chapter was held at Oxford, which unanimously appealed against Brother Elias in the

matter of the Visitation; but the visitor in his instructions had received other powers which tended to grave injury of the brethren. He went, therefore, to the Province of Scotland, and, convoking a chapter,

**The Friars in Scotland refuse to receive him.** purposed to make a Visitation. But the brethren at once drew up an appeal and presented it, saying that as they had already

been visited on the part of the General Chapter by the Minister of Ireland they did not wish to receive another visitor. Therefore, having everywhere caused confusion, and being himself not a little perturbed, Brother Wygmund returned to Germany, taking with him the report of his Visitation, and Brother William of Esseby, whom he had sent to Ireland for the purpose of making a Visitation there, joined him at Cologne, affairs being yet unsettled.

But the brethren who went to Rome at once petitioned that in future the Visitation of the Provinces should be made only by authority of the General



Chapter, in accordance with the constitution concerning visitors.

It was said by Brother Arnulph, penitentiary of our Lord the Pope, that the devil incarnate could not have invented a more subtle or more certain scheme for ensnaring souls than was this Visitation.

In the Visitation chapter, however, Brother William de Colville did indeed preach against contracting debts, and said that it was with procurators as with a certain priest who was accustomed every year to make a feast on St. Nicholas' Day;<sup>1</sup> but he became so poor that one year he could not afford his accustomed banquet. The day, however, came round, and as he lay on his bed he heard the bells ring out for matins. And the first bell, as it swung backwards and forwards, seemed to him to say: "Io ke fray; io ke fray?" and the second bell, swinging forwards and backwards, replied: "A crey; a crey." But whilst he was thinking how he might repay the debt the bells rang out together, and seemed to say: "Ke de un, ke de el; ke de un, ke de el."<sup>2</sup> And rising up, he borrowed what he needed and made a feast. This sermon was applauded by the chapter.

At another Visitation Chapter, held by Brother Wygred, many accusations were made against Brother

<sup>1</sup> December 6th.

<sup>2</sup> "What shall I do? What shall I do?" "Borrow, borrow!" "Something from one; something from another." Compare modern Italian: "Io che farrei." "A credito."

Eustace de Merc of holy memory, at that time Guardian Brother of Oxford, and for a day and a half he Eustace de Merc was excluded from the chapter. Now Merc is harshly there was another brother against whom treated. also certain accusations were made; but the brethren refused to accept them, and at once acquitted him. Whereupon he cried out, "Miserable me! that a man of such acknowledged sanctity, of proved religious spirit and exceeding discretion, should be so visited whilst I have escaped! Who now will set store by the judgments of men?"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OF THE DIVISION OF THE PROVINCE.

SOME little time having elapsed since the coming of the brethren to England, Brother Elias, the Minister-General, now demanded that the English Province be divided into two provinces; the one to be styled the Province of Scotland, and the other the Province of England as heretofore; for he wished, it is said, that as the Order of Preachers had twelve Priors-Provincial scattered throughout the whole world, after the manner of the twelve Apostles, so in like fashion he might have under his authority seventy-two Ministers after the manner of the seventy-two disciples.

Brother Henry de Reresby<sup>1</sup> therefore was appointed Minister of Scotland, but before he could proceed thither he died. Whereupon Brother John de Kethene, Guardian of London, succeeded him, and he caused all the houses beyond Scotland. York to be included in his province, and in these houses received many useful and honest persons into the Order. He was himself a model of

<sup>1</sup> See chap. v.

piety, being most zealous for the divine office. It was he who received with becoming reverence our venerable father, Brother Albert, at our house in Leicester, and humbly besought him to expound the statutes to the brethren. Now when he had laudably governed the Province of Scotland for many years, and that province was again united to England, Brother John was sent by Brother Albert, then Minister-General, to be Minister in Ireland. Nor ought it to be for-

**The English Friars** zealous for poverty. gotten that at the General Chapter of Genoa Brother John de Kethene, together with Brother Gregory de Bossellis, faithfully stood by Brother William of Nottingham of happy memory, the Minister of England, and in opposition to almost the entire chapter fortunately brought it to pass that the privilege granted by our Lord the Pope to receive money through procurators be altogether abolished, and that, moreover, the interpretation of the Rule by the Lord Pope Innocent, in those matters in which it was more lax than the interpretation of Pope Gregory, should be put aside.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Has Eccleston made a mistake in relating this incident? The Chapter of Genoa was held in 1224. The Declaration of Innocent IV. was issued on November 14th, 1245. At the Chapter of Metz, at which Brother William of Nottingham was present (see Eccleston, chap. xiv.), the majority of the chapter declared against the Declaration. Has Eccleston, therefore, mistakenly spoken in this place of the Chapter of Genoa, when he should have spoken of the Chapter of Metz? Or was the question of asking Innocent IV. to make a declaration first mooted at the Chapter of Genoa and opposed by the English?

Brother John also spoke before the whole chapter in favour of reconciliation of Brother Elias and obtained that certain brethren be sent to exhort him not to put off his return to the obedience of the Church and the Order. Such, too, was his care to foster study that he caused to be bought at Paris a Bible with a complete commentary and had it sent to Ireland. Finally, he had a wonderful gift for consoling the brethren in their troubles, so that many brethren who were disconsolate in their own provinces, fled to him and under him seemed to prosper. But when he had been Minister for twenty<sup>1</sup> years he was released from the office by the Chapter of Metz, at which chapter also Brother William, the Minister of England, was released.<sup>2</sup>

Now when Brother Elias was deposed it was decreed that there should be only thirty-two Provinces in the Order—sixteen ultramontane and sixteen cismontane. For since the Ministers and Custodes elect the Minister-General, if there be too great a number of voters in electing and legislating it is difficult to get affairs settled, since the consent of so many persons would be required, and in a multitude there is confusion.

<sup>1</sup> The York MS. says *ten* (Brewer).

<sup>2</sup> See chapter xiv. The following passage seems to have been inserted here as an afterthought. "In the time of Brother John, Brother Elias had commanded the brethren to wash their own clothes. The brethren of the Province of England therefore did as they were commanded; but the brethren of the Province of Scotland awaited their own rescript."

## CHAPTER IX.

### HOW THE BRETHREN ACQUIRED NEW PLACES.

**T**HE number of the brethren having increased from day to day, the houses and ground which sufficed for them when they were a few could not contain them when they were a multitude. Moreover, by the providence of God many persons entered the Order for whom it seemed but right to make more honourable provision. And in some places the brethren had in their simplicity, without thought of the future, so situated themselves that their places could not be enlarged, and so they had to remove elsewhere. Hence it happened that even during the lifetime of Brother Agnellus there was a large increase both of houses and places, and yet because of his love of poverty he would never permit any ground to be enlarged nor any house to be built except as inevitable necessity required. The infirmary at Oxford which he built is a clear evidence of this, for he built it in such humble fashion that the height of the walls did not much exceed the height of a man, and even until the time of Brother Albert this same house was without a guest-room.

In London he had the walls of the dormitory rebuilt of stone in place of the mud walls, but left the roof as it was.

Under Brother Albert the place at Northampton was changed, as also the places at Worcester and Hereford.

So, too, under Brother Haymo the grounds were enlarged in various places, for he said "he would rather the brethren should have ample ground and cultivate it, and so supply themselves with messes when they were at home, than that they should beg their food from others."

**Brother  
Haymo in-  
creases the  
grounds.**

This he said on the occasion of the enlargement of the ground at Gloucester, where the brethren had formerly, by the decision of Brother Agnellus, parted with a large plot of ground, which was afterwards with great difficulty again acquired from Sir Thomas Berkeley through the sagacity and devotion of his wife.

Under Brother William the place at York was changed, as also those at Bristol and Bridgwater. At Grimsby and Oxford, however, the places were sufficiently large. Nevertheless, a certain brother (whom some styled "Brother William's soul," for that this latter had written to him with his own hand, and with exceeding affection, at a time when the brother was in great desolation of spirit), having in a pleasant moment said that he would accuse him to the Minister-General for not inclosing the place at London, Brother William warmly replied: "And I will tell the Minister-

**Brother  
William of  
Nottingham  
refuses to  
build.**

General that I did not become a friar for the purpose of building walls." In the same spirit of poverty he had the roof of the chapel in London taken off, and ordered the embossments in the cloister to be scraped away. Yet he sometimes said to that same brother who was his intimate friend, that it was well that our houses should be sufficiently large, lest the brethren who came afterwards should make them exceeding large.

Now Brother Robert of Slapton told me that it once happened that the brethren were in a certain Saint Francis place which was lent to them, for they had not yet acquired ground there, and it appeared to Brother Robert of Slapton. seemed to the brother who was Guardian that Saint Francis came to the place, and the brethren went to him and led him into the solarium, and there the Saint sat for a long time in silence, looking about him. And the brethren being astonished, the Guardian asked: "Father, of what art thou thinking?" And Saint Francis answered: "Look around at this house." And the Guardian looked, and saw that the whole house was built of twigs, mud, and refuse. And Saint Francis said: "Such ought to be the houses of the Friars Minor." Then the Guardian took water and washed Saint Francis' feet, and kissed the stigmata in the feet. These things, I believe, happened to Brother Robert himself.

I myself saw a famous preacher who publicly confessed that through the worries of building houses in a



certain place he had lost the inclination to preach, and no longer had the devotion he used to have.

Some  
anecdotes.

And Brother John, visitor of the Order of Preachers in England, related of Brother William of Abingdon that before he had built the house at Gloucester he had an incomparable gift of preaching, and that such a preacher as he, and one so gracious in speech, ought never to have been occupied with buildings. For, said Brother John, the anxieties of questing had so degraded Brother William as to cause the King of England once to exclaim, "Brother William, there was a time when thou couldst speak of spiritual things; now all thou canst say is, Give, give, give!" Another time Brother William was conversing with the King and flattering him, hoping thereby to obtain something, and the King called him a serpent.

This story, too, have I heard told by the Lord Abbot of Chertsey. A certain friend of his of the Order of Preachers came to him begging for wood, and the Abbot gave him one piece. But his friend said it seemed hard to have been put to so much trouble for the sake of getting but one piece of wood. So the Abbot gave him a second piece. But the Preacher went on to say that as God was a Trinity he ought to be given three pieces; whereupon the Abbot replied, "By God who is One, thou shalt now have but one piece."

Also it is related how when Brother Henry of Burford became Guardian of Paris, there were in that convent not more than about thirty brethren, and

they built for themselves a place called Valvert, and the house was so spacious and lofty that many of the brethren considered it contrary to the poverty of the Order. Wherefore some of them, and above all Brother Agnellus, prayed to the blessed Francis that he would destroy it. And behold, when the brethren were about to enter into it by divine intervention not one was able to take up his abode there, for the roof and the walls collapsed even to the very basement. These verses also were found written in the place:—

“Gratia divina docuit presente ruina  
Quod contentus homo sit brevior domo.”<sup>1</sup>

And so the brethren gave up the ground.

<sup>1</sup> “By the present ruin grace divine has taught  
That man be content with a dwelling short.”

## CHAPTER X.

### OF THE DIVINITY READERS.

**S**EEING how the place was increasing where the highest learning in England flourished, and where scholars from all parts were accustomed to meet,<sup>1</sup>

**Brother  
Agnellus  
establishes a  
school at  
Oxford.**

**Grosseteste  
lectures to  
the Friars.**

**Other  
Readers.**

Brother Agnellus had a school of becoming dimensions built in the convent of the brethren, and besought Master Robert Grosseteste<sup>2</sup> of holy memory to lecture to them. Under him they made exceeding progress in a short time, both as to their sermons and to those refinements of manners which are suitable for preaching. When he by divine Providence was translated from the lecture hall to the episcopate, that Master Peter lectured to the brethren, who was afterwards promoted to be Bishop in Scotland. To him succeeded Master Roger de Wesham, who became Dean of the Church of Lincoln, and after that, Bishop of Coventry. In like manner when Master Thomas of Wales had laudably lectured to the brethren in the same place, he was taken away to be

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards Bishop of Lincoln.

Bishop of St. David's in Wales.<sup>1</sup> Now as these Masters continued favourable unto the brethren, the deeds and fame of the brethren went forth into many places, so much so that the good report of the English the English brethren and their progress in Friars studies was spoken of in the other provinces abroad. of the Order, and the Minister-General, Brother Elias, sent Brother Philip of Wales and Brother Adam of York to read divinity at Lyons. Moreover, when Brother Albert arrived in England he instituted Brother Vincent of Coventry Reader at London, and Brother Henry (brother-german to Brother Vincent), Reader at Canterbury. In a little while, too, there were Readers established at London and elsewhere. Readers at various other places—Brother William of Leicester at Hereford, Brother Gregory de Bossellis at Leicester, Brother Gilbert of Cranford at Bristol, Brother John of Weston at Cambridge, and Brother Adam de Marisco at Oxford. And thus the gift of wisdom flowed out over the English Province, so that before Brother William of Nottingham had completed his ministry there were in England thirty Readers who held solemn disputations, and three or four who read without disputations. For he placed students in the universities for each Readership, who were to succeed the actual Readers when these died or were removed.

<sup>1</sup> Grosseteste was Bishop of Lincoln A.D. 1235–1252; Wesham, Bishop of Coventry, 1245–1256; Thomas of Wales, Bishop of St. David's, 1248–1255.

Omitting, therefore, other matters, we will now briefly tell of the Readers in the universities. Some Readers there were who began as Masters, others as at the Bachelors. The first of the brethren to universities. read at Oxford was, as I have said, Brother Adam de Marisco. The second, Brother Ralph of Colebridge,<sup>1</sup> had already presided in a praiseworthy manner at Paris (in fact, as Regent in Theology At Oxford. he entered there) when he was sent by the Minister-General to preside over the school at Oxford. The third was Brother Eustace de Normanville. Of him Brother Peter, Minister of England, said he gave greater edification than others by his entrance into the Order, because he was noble by birth and very rich and had taken his degrees in arts and law; moreover, he was Chancellor of Oxford and took his degree in Theology with ease. The fourth was Brother Thomas of York, and the fifth Brother Richard of Cornwall. This last took the habit at Paris at the time Brother Elias was causing disturbance throughout the whole Order. With much courage and devotion he made his profession in England during the same trouble and whilst the appeal against Brother Elias was still pending. Afterwards he gave a course of lectures on the Sentences at Paris, where he was held to be a great and admirable philosopher.

There was a certain eminent Reader who studied with me at Oxford, and he was accustomed as a

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III.

student during the Master's lecture or disputation, to

give his attention to other matters rather

**Anecdote.** than to the lecture. He would even compile

original notes of his own. But when he himself was

appointed Reader his own students were so inattentive

that he declared he would as willingly each day close

his book and leave them as stay and give his lecture.

Then, struck with remorse, he exclaimed, "By a just

judgment of God none of these will now listen to me,

who would never listen to my own teacher." More-

over, he was too frequently in the company of secular

friends, and for this reason was now seldom found with

the brethren. Wherefore he was made an example to

the other brethren to show how words of wisdom can

be learned only in silence and quiet, and how the law

of God, as the Saint tells us, can be understood only

by the mind at rest. Afterwards, however, he re-

formed and gave himself to quiet study, and made

such remarkable progress that the Bishop of Lincoln

would declare that he could hardly believe this

Reader's lectures to be his own. So the fame of his

good life increased until he was called by the Minister-

General to the parts of Lombardy, and in the very

court of the Pope was held to be a great man. At

length, being in the agony of death, he was visited

by the Mother of God, to whom he had ever been

devoted, and the evil spirits being put to flight, he

passed happily into the purgatorial pains, as he him-

self afterwards revealed to a certain companion of his.

For he told him how he was in purgatory and suffered grievously in his feet, because he had too frequently gone to visit a certain devout matron in order to comfort her, when he ought to have been busy with lectures and other more urgent duties, and he besought his companion to have Masses said for his soul. Therefore for the space of two years his companion frequently had Masses said for him, offering also many other suffrages.

These who follow were Readers at Cambridge and not at Oxford—Brother Vincent of Coventry, Brother

John of Weston, Brother William of Poitiers, and Brother Humfrid. This Brother  
 Readers at  
 Cambridge.

Humfrid himself told me how he was once sick at Cambridge and heard a voice saying, "Mayest thou feel like a stone," and he lay still as though he were a stone. Then came two devils unto him who sat at his left hand, and a good angel who sat at his right; and the devils began to vex him, uttering calumnies, but the good angel for a long time was silent. At last the devils said: "When the brethren sit gossiping over their cups at the hour of compline we are busy with them; when they go hence we, too, go hence and find work elsewhere." Then spoke the good angel: "Behold, how great is the malice of the evil ones; they wish to weary thee to death that thou mightest no more praise thy Creator's Name." Thus comforted, he began from that moment to perspire and was restored to health.

## CHAPTER XI.

### OF THE APPOINTMENT OF CONFESSORS.

**N**OW there were amongst the brethren many who though they were neither Preachers nor Readers, yet by the gracious favour of the Bishops and in obedience to the Minister-Provincial and by their appointment, heard the confessions of both religious and seculars in various places. Amongst these the

most notable was a Friar of London, Brother  
**Brother**  
**Solomon.** Solomon, who was, as it were, Confessor-General both to the city and the Court.

It happened when he was Guardian of London after his sickness, of which we have already told,<sup>1</sup> the Lord Roger of holy memory, Bishop of London, demanded of him canonical obedience. But Brother Solomon in friendly fashion—for he had long known the Bishop—withstood him and besought a delay. Now this Bishop held the Order in such reverence that he would rise whenever a brother saluted him. But Brother Agnellus on this occasion sent at once to the Roman Court and obtained the decree which is styled “*Nimis iniqua.*”

Another Confessor was Brother Maurice of Derham

<sup>1</sup> See chap. iii.



of happy memory. He once found a boy who had for some time been wasting under some  
**Brother** desperate disease, and, having heard his  
**Maurice of** confession, he directed him to say the  
**Derham.** "Hail, Mary!" thrice each day for a certain number of days, to beseech the Blessed Virgin to restore him to health so that he might become a Friar Minor. The boy, having said these prayers to the end, he was afterwards cured. When, therefore, he was about sixteen years of age, he bound himself to live like a Friar Minor until he should attain the age when he might lawfully enter in amongst the brethren, and having attained that age, he was without delay received into the Order under Brother Agnellus.

At Gloucester was Brother Vincent of Worcester, Father of the whole Province. A man of great  
**Brother** abstinence and personal austerity, he was  
**Vincent of** yet of such a sweet and genial disposition  
**Worcester.** towards those who were under him that he was loved by all as though he were an angel. Wherefore because of the gravity of his manners and his exceeding prudence, he was afterwards appointed to preach, and was chosen Confessor to Roger, Bishop of Coventry.

At Lynn there was a man of remarkable sanctity, Brother Galfrid of Salisbury, who because of the  
**Brother** austerity of his life was said to be a second  
**Galfrid of** Francis, and because of his virtue, sweet-  
**Salisbury.** ness, and simplicity was called a second

Anthony. When he was hearing confessions such was his gentleness and the pity he felt towards his penitents, that if these did not show befitting signs of sorrow, he would weep and groan until they, too, began to weep, as happened to a nobleman, Sir Alexander de Bissingbourne. He had confessed his sins as though he were telling a story, but Brother Galfrid wept so bitterly that at last the nobleman wept too. Then, listening to the brother's salutary advice, and assisted by his merits, he formed the purpose of entering the Order, in which purpose he died most holily. After his death he appeared to his friend Brother John of Stamford, and when Brother John asked him how he was, he replied: "My soul is as a creature which has placed itself in the hands of its Creator; and he is happy who does this with his whole heart." He also instructed Brother John concerning the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, and so sublime and subtle were his words as to surpass the power of mortal man.

At Oxford there was a Confessor, Brother Eustace de Merc<sup>1</sup> of happy memory, who afterwards was Guardian there and at length Custos of  
**Brother**           Guardian there and at length Custos of  
**Eustace de** York. He used to tell how Saint Lanfranc  
**Merc.**           wished to enter religion when he was  
 already a most renowned theologian, and how he  
**story of**       put on the habit of a monk and went to  
**Lanfranc.**   various abbeys to try the monastic state.  
 And he came and knocked with his water-bottle at

<sup>1</sup> See chap. vii.

the door of the choir, but when the monks looked towards the door and began to laugh, he said to himself, "God is not here." At last he came to Bec Herluin, and there not one of the monks paid any attention to his knocking; so here he entered as a lay-brother. But when Pope Nicholas convened the Council against Berengarius, Lanfranc obtained leave to accompany his Abbot, and there at the Council, when all others were silenced by the arguments of the heretic, he besought that he might be allowed to speak, and so clearly did he set forth his arguments that Berengarius exclaimed, "Either you are Lanfranc or the devil!" And so he became known to the Council.

## CHAPTER XII.

### OF THE MINISTERS-GENERAL.

**T**HE first Minister-General of the Order after the blessed Francis was Brother Elias, who had been a Writer at Bologna. To him succeeded Brother John

**Brother Elias.** Parenti of Florence, Minister of Spain, a man of wisdom and piety and very austere;

**Brother John Parenti.** but he was dismissed from office by the partisans of Brother Elias, who was again elected Minister-General. It happened in

**A.D. 1227.** this wise. At the chapter during which the translation of the body of Saint Francis took place, the partisans of Brother Elias determined that all whom

**Conspiracy of Brother Elias,** he had permitted to come should take part in the General Chapter, for he had allowed all to come to the chapter who

**A.D. 1230.** would elect him in opposition to the will of the Ministers-Provincial. Wherefore taking Brother Elias in their arms, they carried him from his cell to the door of the chapter-room, and, breaking down the door, would have put him into the place of the Minister-General, which, when he saw, Brother John stripped himself of his habit before the whole chapter.

At length the disturbers, being put to shame, ceased their disturbance; but they would listen neither to Saint Anthony nor to any other Minister-Provincial. The people outside hearing the disturbance, believed it to have arisen because the body of Saint Francis had been translated three days before the chapter met. But five novices who had been soldiers and were present at the chapter, when they saw what was taking place, wept. They said, nevertheless, that the disturbance would bring good to the Order, since no Order could tolerate such disorderly members. And so it came to pass; for the disturbers were separated and sent to do penance in various provinces. But Brother Elias went and dwelt in a small hermitage and let his hair and beard grow, and by this simulation of holiness regained the goodwill of the Order and of the brethren.

An embassy, therefore, was sent by the chapter to Pope Gregory to obtain an explanation of the Rule. Besides the Minister-General there went Saint Anthony, Brother Gerard Rusinol (penitentiary of the Pope), Brother Haymo (afterwards Minister-General), Brother Leo (afterwards Archbishop of Milan), Brother Gerard of Modena, and Brother Peter of Brixen. These also informed the Pope of the scandal Brother Elias had caused when the Minister-General revoked the decree permitting any of the brethren who wished to come to the chapter, and how, being angered at this, he had caused the body of Saint Francis to be

translated before all the brethren were assembled. The Pope, when he heard of these things, was greatly moved and showed great indignation against him until he was told what manner of life Brother Elias was now leading in his hermitage. Wherefore when, at the

**Brother Elias**  
**elected,**  
**A.D. 1233.** Chapter of Rieti, Brother John Parenti was dismissed, the Pope permitted Brother Elias to be again appointed Minister-General, chiefly because of his intimacy with Saint Francis.

After this Brother Elias, by reason of his worldliness and cruelty, again threw the whole Order into a turmoil, and now Brother Haymo of Paris moved an

**The Friars**  
**appeal**  
**against**  
**Brother**  
**Elias.** appeal against him; and notwithstanding the opposition of Brother Elias, Brother Arnulph, Vicar of the Order and penitentiary of the Lord Pope Gregory IX.,

convoked a General Chapter, at which many of the Ministers-Provincial and upright brethren of the Cismontane Provinces of the Order were elected, who were to take measures for the reformation of the Order: which, being done, an account thereof was rendered in General Chapter before the Pope, and at this chapter seven Cardinals were present.

Now when the Pope had preached—and his sermon was upon the golden statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, and his text was: "Thou, O King, didst begin to think what should come to pass"<sup>1</sup>—then did

<sup>1</sup> Daniel ii. 29 (Vulgate).

Brother Elias begin to excuse himself, alleging that the brethren when they elected him Minister-General did say that they wished him to eat gold and ride a horse if such his weakness required, whereas now they turned against him, and were scandalised. And when Brother Haymo desired leave to reply, the Pope would not permit him, till the Lord Cardinal Robert de Sumercote pleaded: "My Lord Pope, this old man is a good man, and it is well you should hear him, especially as he is sparing of his words."

Brother Haymo therefore rose up, timid and trembling, but Elias sat to all appearance fearless and undisturbed. Thereupon Brother Haymo began by briefly commending the words of Brother Elias as those of a revered father, but urged against him that although the brethren might have wished him to eat gold, yet they had not asked him to amass it. Moreover, they might have asked him to ride a horse, but had never requested him to keep a palfrey or a charger. At this Brother Elias, unable to contain his rage, called out that Brother Haymo lied, and the partisans of Brother Elias began to insult Brother Haymo in like manner and to make a tumult. Then did others of the opposite party cry out against these. But the Pope, greatly moved, commanded silence, saying, "These are not the manners of Religious," and for a long while he sat silent and pondering, till they were all filled with shame.

Meanwhile the Lord Cardinal, Reginald Protector

of the Order, openly admonished Brother Elias to put his resignation into the hands of the Pope, but Brother Elias publicly declared he would not. Thereupon the Pope, having commended the personal character of Brother Elias and spoken of his intimacy with Saint Francis, concluded by saying that he had believed his ministry to be acceptable to the brethren, but that now, since it was shown to be no longer acceptable, his decree was that Brother Elias be dismissed. And at once he removed him from the office of Minister-General. Thereat did the brethren rejoice with an immeasurable and unspeakable joy, such as they had never before seen, who merited to be present.

The Pope thereupon retired to one of the cells and called to him the Ministers-Provincial and the Custodes for the election, and before they gave their votes in writing he heard them orally. When, therefore, Brother Albert of Pisa elected, orally. When, therefore, Brother Albert of A.D. 1239. Pisa, Minister of England, was canonically elected, Brother Arnulph, the penitentiary, who more than anyone else had managed these affairs, announced the election and intoned the *Te Deum laudamus*.

Now Brother Elias, as has already been said, had never made profession of the Rule confirmed by the Pope,<sup>1</sup> and hence held himself at liberty to receive money. Wherefore it was now ordained that he should make profession of this Rule, and not only he

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the Rule confirmed by Honorius III. in A.D. 1223.



but the entire chapter and the whole Order. And so it was done.

Then the Minister-General celebrated Mass, and afterwards said to the brethren who were not of the chapter: "You have now been present at the first Mass ever celebrated in this Order by a Minister-General. Go now with the blessing of Jesus Christ to your own places."

In this chapter Brother Haymo was appointed Minister of all England, and Brother John de Kethene, who had been Minister of Scotland, was appointed Minister of Ireland.

After this Brother Elias chose to live at Cortona, and, in opposition to the Minister-General's mandate, visited the houses of the Poor Ladies without leave, and thereby incurred the excommunication decreed by the Pope. Wherefore Brother Albert ordered Brother Elias to come to him and be absolved, or at least to meet him at some place midway between Rome and Cortona. But this Brother Elias declined to do, and word thereof came to the Pope. Now when he heard that the Pope desired him to obey the Minister-General in the same manner as any other brother must obey, Brother Elias would not brook the humiliation (for, indeed, he had never learned to obey), but went over into the party of the Emperor Frederic. Wherefore, not without just cause, he was publicly excommunicated by the Pope.

**Apostasy  
of Brother  
Elias.**

Brother Albert bore himself well in the General Ministry, and whilst he lived set himself to correct the abuses of his predecessor in the provinces beyond the Alps, where especially the brethren had departed from their first fervour. He died peacefully at Rome, commending the English above all other nations in that they were zealous for the Order.

**Brother  
Albert  
praises the  
English.**

He was succeeded by Brother Haymo, an Englishman, who carried on the good work begun by Brother Albert. Under him was held the first Chapter of Definitors,<sup>1</sup> which was also the last, for on account of the insolence of these Definitors such a chapter was never again held in the Order. They determined that the Ministers-Provincial who were at the chapter with the Minister-General should by all manner of means be turned out of the place where the chapter was held, and, in fact, this was done. Therefore at the next General Chapter because of the insolence of these Definitors, they abolished the statute concerning the Chapter of Subjects and the canonical election of Guardians and Custodes, which had been framed in the presence of the Pope on the occasion when Brother Elias was deposed. For certain of the brethren wished even to abolish the office of Custos, saying that such an office was superfluous.

Once, too, when Brother Haymo was on this side

<sup>1</sup> i.e. of delegates sent by the provinces.

of the Alps he was summoned to Rome in the middle of winter by the Cardinal-Protector of the Order and other Cardinals, to answer certain accusations made against him, and he answered so well that the Cardinals were much drawn to him.

**Brother  
Haymo  
defends  
himself.**

In his time a mandate went forth from the General Chapter that brethren should be elected in each province, who should write down any doubts the brethren might have concerning the Rule and send them to the Minister-General. So the brethren in England elected Brother Adam de Marisco, Brother Peter, Custos of Oxford, Brother Henry de Burford, and certain others. Now on the very night of the election Saint Francis appeared to Brother John Bannister and showed him a very deep well. And Brother John said:

**Anecdote.**

"Father, the brethren wish to explain the Rule; better is it that thou thyself shouldst explain it to us." But Saint Francis replied: "Go, my son, to the lay-brothers, and they will explain thy Rule to thee."

When therefore they had written down certain doubts, the said brethren sent them to the Minister-General in a small box without a seal, and at the same time they begged him by the overflowing blood of Jesus Christ to leave the Rule as it was written by Saint Francis under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Now this petition greatly pleased the Protector of the Order and the

**Zeal of the  
English for  
the Rule.**

brethren beyond the Alps, and confirmed the witness borne by Brother Albert of Pisa to the zeal of the English Province. Brother Haymo died at Anagni, and on his deathbed was visited by Pope Innocent IV.

The next in succession was Brother Crescentius, Minister of Verona, formerly a famous physician, **Brother** whose zeal was inflamed by charity, **Crescentius** moulded by learning, and maintained by **of Jesi** a stout heart. In his own province there **elected,** were brethren so entirely opposed to him **A.D. 1244.** that on the very night before the chapter in which he was elected, he complained to the brethren who were called Zelators, concerning the rebellion of the brethren of his province. Afterwards, one of the brethren had a vision, in which he saw the Minister with shaven head and a grey beard reaching to his girdle; and he heard a voice from heaven uttering these words concerning him: "This is Mardocheus." Now when Brother Ralph of Rheims heard of the vision he at once said: "Of a certainty he will this day be elected Minister-General." But when Brother Crescentius had faithfully and discreetly fulfilled his ministry for a time, he besought to be relieved, and was afterwards created Bishop of the city of his birth.<sup>1</sup>

He was succeeded by Brother John of Parma, a Reader who had lectured on the Sentences in the University of Paris. He was the chief upholder of primitive observance in the Order. He came to

<sup>1</sup> Jesi, in the Marches of Ancona.

**Brother John of Parma.**  
**A.D. 1247.** England during the time of Brother William of Nottingham, and held a Provincial Chapter at Oxford, when he brought back to fraternal unity those brethren who had begun to depart from the common way. On his return he spread throughout all the provinces the report of the obedience and uprightness of the English brethren. At the University of Paris he personally reconciled the brethren who had appealed to the Pope, and prevailed upon them to withdraw their appeal, setting before them the simplicity of our life. He ordained that the General Chapter should be held alternately on either side of the Alps. At length, feeling himself unable any longer to bear the burden of the General Ministry, he obtained release from the Lord Pope Alexander IV.

He had a saying that the edifice of the Order was chiefly constructed of two walls, to wit, holy conduct and learning; but that the brethren had raised the wall of learning till it reached even unto the highest heaven, since they had come to argue about the very existence of God, whereas the wall of holy conduct they left so low that it was considered great praise to say of a brother, "He is a safe man." Wherefore they seemed to build not rightly.

Moreover, he would have the brethren defend themselves against the encroachments of prelates and princes, and preserve respect for their profession, by

their public merits rather than by apostolic privileges, that they might be in truth Friars Minor in their humility and meekness.

Now he once, in full General Chapter at Genoa, commanded Brother Boniface, who had been a companion of Saint Francis, to speak to the brethren concerning the truth of the Stigmata, since many of the brethren throughout the world had doubts concerning them. And Brother Boniface replied, weeping, "These sinful eyes of mine have seen them; these sinful hands of mine have pressed them."<sup>1</sup> Concerning these same Stigmata, Brother Leo, companion of Saint Francis, told Brother Peter, the Minister of England, that the apparition of the Seraphim took place whilst Saint Francis was in ecstasy, and that the evidence was greater even than that written in the Saint's life. Moreover many things, he said, had been revealed to Saint Francis of which he had never spoken to any living man; but this the Saint did tell Brother Ruffino, his companion, that when he saw the angel at a distance he was exceedingly terrified, and that the angel had treated him hardly. And the angel said that the Order should endure until the end of the world, that no man of evil purpose should be able to

<sup>1</sup> I have taken the liberty to transpose this incident and the following. In the text they follow the subsequent saying of Brother Haymo. It is difficult, however, to know in what order exactly these incidents were related in the original text. Some of them seem to be interpolations by a later hand.

continue therein, that no man who should bear ill-will towards the Order should live long, and that no man who truly loved the Order should have an evil end. And Saint Francis commanded Brother Ruffino to wash the stone upon which the angel stood and anoint it with oil, which Brother Ruffino did. These things were written down by Brother Garinus of Sedenfeld at the dictation of Brother Leo.

Now this saying had Brother Haymo concerning certain brethren who, having been men of great strength, fell sick, and after their sickness were unwilling to return to the convent lest, perhaps, they should not be allowed to again seek recreation. He said they were like unto a boy who was unwilling to be taught his letters; who, when he should have said A, replied that since he could as well say B he would in no wise say A, nor would he say B lest the master should teach him C, and so on.

Brother Haymo used also to say that when he was in the world he could not live without many changes of clothing and shoes, but that afterwards he was stronger without them. When he was about to return from the General Chapter at which he was elected Minister-Provincial (of France), he was fearful because of the weakness of his health; but he thought that once he had crossed the Alps he would have nothing to fear. Yet it happened that where he was most in fear he became stronger and in France grew weaker.

Brother Ralph of Rheims, an Englishman, after many labours returned to England, and having spent much time in contemplation at Salisbury, died in peace. He used to tell how Saint Francis was once walking along a road in a cold wind, and grew disheartened; but arousing himself, he went up into a mountain and took off his garments, and then turned again towards the wind, saying that it would be well now to be clothed even in one tunic.

Brother  
Ralph of  
Rheims  
relates a  
story about  
Saint  
Francis.

Brother Albert was wont to say that there were three things which glorified the Order, to wit, bare feet, coarse garments, and contempt of money.

Saying of  
Brother  
Albert of  
Pisa.

Brother Walter of Reigate told how it was revealed to a certain brother in the Province of Saint Francis,<sup>1</sup> that the devils every year held a chapter for the injury of the Order, and that they came to the chapter by three roads, namely, familiarity with women, the admission into the Order of unworthy persons, and the handling of money.

And of  
Brother  
Walter of  
Reigate.

<sup>1</sup> Umbria.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### OF THE MINISTERS-PROVINCIAL.

**T**HE first of the Ministers-Provincial, as has already been said, was Brother Agnellus of Pisa, a man highly endowed with natural prudence, and conspicuous for virtue, observance of Rule, and honesty of life. Having with success carried the appeal concerning the English Bishops,<sup>1</sup> to the Roman Court, whither he had proceeded accompanied by Brother Peter of Tewkesbury (at that time Guardian of London) and some Friars Preachers, he fell sick at Oxford of dysentery, which sickness it is said was brought on by the hard labours which he undertook to make peace between the King and the Earl Marshal on the borders of Wales,<sup>2</sup> as well as by his frequent journeyings through the province; and when by the use of medicinal remedies he was cured of the dysentery, he was afterwards seized with a colic and such pain in the side that he could hardly refrain from crying aloud.

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Roger of Wendover gives a detailed account of Brother Agnellus' interview with Richard the Earl Marshal, and of his endeavour to prevent civil war (*Chronicle*, A.D. 1233).

During the three days which preceded his death he prayed in a loud voice almost without intermission, "Sweet Jesus, come!" Now when he had received the Sacraments according to the forms of the Church, the brethren besought him to give directions concerning his successor, and he advised that Brother Hugh of Wells be sent to Brother Elias with a petition from all the brethren that one of these three be appointed Minister, to wit, Brother Albert of Pisa, Brother Haymo, or Brother Ralph of Rheims. Moreover, in as far as it was in his power to do so, he named Brother Peter of Tewkesbury his Vicar; then he begged of each brother separately that he would pray for him, and the Commendation being finished, in which he himself joined with the community, he peacefully expired.

Now it seemed to Brother Walter de Maddeley that a dead body lay in the choir, and that it had recently been taken down from the cross, and it was marked with five bleeding wounds after the manner of Jesus Christ crucified. He believed, therefore, that it was the sweet Jesus Himself, but as he came near he saw that it was Brother Agnellus.

Here it is meet to record how the venerable Master Serle, Dean of Oxford, advised Brother Agnellus seldom to eat outside the convent. But a certain Guardian of a convent on the same day that he had preached to the people, was joking after dinner

with a certain monk in the presence of a secular, saying that he wondered they were allowed to eat even with the brethren. The secular thereupon remarked quietly to a brother, who was his secretary, that such words were not becoming in one who was a Superior and a Preacher. The same Guardian afterwards told me that he would rather have had his ribs pierced with a lance than have given such scandal. For the brethren were most zealous for the good name of the Order, especially Brother Agnellus, who would not spare even the King's secretary, but removed him from the Court and forbade him either to give or receive presents.

Brother Agnellus was for long Minister of England whilst still remaining in deacon's orders, and he would not consent to be promoted to the priesthood until the Provincial Chapter petitioned the General Chapter to command that he be promoted. Such was his devotion at the divine service, that not only at the time of Mass but even when saying the divine office in choir or on a journey, he might be seen to shed tears continuously, yet so that neither by any noise nor by groans nor by any contortion of the face could it be known that he wept. He always said the office standing, and once sharply reproved a brother who, when he was out questing, sat down to say his hours. When he felt that he was about to die, he said to Brother Peter of Tewkesbury, "Thou knowest my whole life." And when Brother

Piety of  
Brother  
Agnellus.

Peter replied that he had never made to him a general confession, Brother Agnellus struck his head and began to weep aloud, and at once with a wonderful sorrow made a confession of his whole life. Then calling together the brethren, he absolved them;<sup>1</sup> and when, at his command, they began the Commendation, he closed his eyes with his own hand and folded his hands across his breast in the form of a cross.

After many years the brethren went to remove his body by night, because they were about to pull down the chapel in the choir of which his body  
**Translation of his body.** was buried before the altar, and they found both the sealed coffin in which he lay and the grave itself filled with the purest oil, but the body itself, and the garments in which it was clothed, were incorrupt and gave forth a most sweet perfume.

But when Brother Elias heard from the messenger that Brother Agnellus was dead, he immediately  
**Anger of Brother Elias against English Friars.** caused the Provincial seal to be broken, which bore the figure of a lamb with a cross, for he was angry that the brethren of England should ask for Provincial Minister one whom they themselves nominated. Wherefore he refused to send them any Minister till nearly a year had gone by. At length, recalling one whom he had already despatched hither, he com-

<sup>1</sup> i.e. in as far as they had transgressed the Rule of the Order or the Statutes.

manded Brother Albert of Pisa to go to England and minister to the brethren. Brother Albert had been already Minister of Hungary, Germany, Bologna, and of the Marches of Ancona, Treviso, and Tuscany. He arrived in England, therefore, on the festival of Saint Lucy,<sup>1</sup> and on the following festival of the Purification<sup>2</sup> held a Provincial Chapter at Oxford. And he preached from the text: "Look unto the rock whence you are hewn and to the hole of the pit from which you are dug out."<sup>3</sup>

Now as he did unto the brethren in all things according to his own will, he greatly tried the humility and the meekness, the simplicity and the zeal, the charity and the patience of the brethren in England. But although he had publicly declared that the brethren would always find in him such a master as he had shown himself at the chapter, nevertheless he afterwards from day to day wisely seasoned, more than he had been wont, every sacrifice with the salt of the Gospel; and so the brethren and the Minister were drawn towards each other.

In time he so far approved of the brethren in England that he gave his heart to them entirely and bound them to him in an attachment beyond words. For, indeed, in all his endeavours to bring about greater perfection he found them at one with himself, and

<sup>1</sup> December 13th.<sup>2</sup> February 2nd.<sup>3</sup> Isaias li, 1.

ready, if need be, for the sake of reform, to go with him to prison or into exile.

Amongst the statutes which he made was this: that in the house for guests silence should be kept at table, except when the Friars Preachers or regular the brethren of other provinces were observance. present. Also, that the brethren should wear old tunics over their new ones, both because of humility and that the new tunics might last longer. He pulled down the stone cloister at Southampton, though with much trouble because of the opposition of the townspeople. With great fervour of spirit he returned to the monks of Reading the writing or agreement whereby they bound themselves not to expel the brethren at their own will.<sup>1</sup> He even offered, should the monks desire it, himself to remove the brethren. And since he could not pull down the chapel of the place, for that the King had built it, he earnestly prayed that Heaven would destroy it. He placed brethren at Chester and Winchester in spite of great difficulties.

He obtained a decree from the Lord Pope Gregory that the Friars Preachers should lay no person under an obligation whereby their freedom to enter any other Order would be taken away, and that the brethren themselves should receive no novice to profession before the year of pro-

<sup>1</sup> Such an agreement being opposed to the principle of absolute poverty or non-ownership.

bation was ended. For they had been accustomed to profess novices, if they wished it, on the very day they entered the Order, as happened with Brother Roger Bacon of happy memory.

Now the Friars Preachers were much disturbed, and after a time besought the Lord Pope Innocent IV. that no Friar Minor should receive to the habit any person whom they had bound to enter their Order, and that any Friar Minor doing this should be *de facto* excommunicated. And they were willing themselves to be held by the same law concerning those whom we should bind. But they bound people in so many ways and published their privilege so widely that they left hardly anybody free. But this trouble did not last long. For Brother William of Nottingham of happy memory and Brother Peter of Tewkesbury showed the Pope what his predecessor had decreed, and he, declaring that he had been deceived, revoked his concession, though after a tiresome delay.

Brother Albert used to say that we ought to have much affection for the Friars Preachers, because in many ways they profited our Order and occasionally taught us what dangers to guard against.

Brother Albert's piety.	At divine office he was most devout, and warded off distractions by keeping his eyes closed.
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His affability.	In his intercourse with the brethren he was always so cheerful and merry that he won the affec- tion of all. Thus when some petty affair, as
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sometimes happened, disturbed the community, he would propound to the brethren around him a parable such as this which was especially told for the sake

**Anecdotes.** of a novice who was present. This novice was exceedingly clever in his own eyes, and would presumptuously interrupt the conversation of others with irrelevant remarks. "A certain rustic," said Brother Albert, "hearing what exceeding peace there was in Paradise and how great were the delights, set out to find it, hoping by some means to be let in. Coming to the gate he found there Saint Peter, and sought to be admitted. But Saint Peter asked him whether he would be able and willing to observe the laws of Paradise. To whom the rustic replied that he would if only the Saint would deign to teach him what they were. Saint Peter thereupon told him that the only law was that he must observe silence. And when the rustic had readily consented to this he was taken in. Now as he wandered through Paradise he saw a ploughman with two oxen, one fat, the other lean; and the fat ox he let go as he would, but the lean ox he was incessantly beating. So up ran the rustic and began to argue with the ploughman. Just then Saint Peter came along and was about to expel him. However, for this once he spared him, but gave him warning to beware in future. But immediately afterwards the rustic saw a man carrying a long piece of wood, who wanted to enter a house, but every time he attempted to enter he turned the wood crossways against the



door. Running up, the rustic began to argue with him that he should turn one of the ends inwards. And again Saint Peter came along at that very moment, and would by all manner of means have expelled him. Nevertheless he spared him once more. Again the rustic set off, and he saw a man cutting down trees in a wood, and all the while he was leaving the old trunks and hollow oaks and hewing down and cutting up the trees which were straight and green and most beautiful. So, running up, the rustic began to upbraid him. At once Saint Peter came along, and this time put him out of Paradise." For Brother Albert would have subjects everywhere hold their superiors in reverence, saying, "Far be it from us that familiarity should breed contempt."

In the aforesaid conversation with the brethren Brother Albert spoke also this parable against the presumption of young men, saying: "A certain young bull wandered day by day through the meadows and cornfields, wherever he willed. One day, about the first or the third hour, he turned aside to where they were ploughing, and he saw that the elder oxen went along slowly and ploughed but little, and he blamed them, saying that he could do as much at one jump. They, therefore, besought him to help them. Now when he was put under the yoke he ran with exceeding swiftness until he came to the middle of the track, and then he began to get tired and to breathe hard; and, looking round, he exclaimed, 'What! is not the whole

furrow ploughed?’ And the old oxen, deriding him, replied, ‘Not yet.’ But the bull declared he could go no farther. Then said the old oxen, ‘For this do we go more quietly, because it behoves us to work at all times and not merely for a little while.’”

Brother Albert, moreover, compelled Brother Eustace de Merc to eat fish, contrary to his custom, saying that the Order had lost many good men through  
 His  
 prudence. their indiscretion. And he related how when he himself was dwelling with Saint Francis in a certain hospital the Saint obliged him to eat twice the amount of food he had used to eat.

Again the liberality of his mind was shown when he severely reprov'd a certain Guardian and also a Preacher because they had not provided the convent more abundantly with food after the labours of a certain festival. Such, too, was his largeness of heart and his compassion that he gave an obedience to a brother who was in weak health to go to his native parts, and to travel from place to place in the various custodies if he so willed. And wherever the brethren were put to straits to provide the sick brother's maintenance he undertook to refund whatever they expended upon him. Wherefore having thus nobly governed the English Province for two years and a half, he went with many others, elected for that purpose, to the chapter which was held against Brother Elias. Then, having been elected Minister-General, he died happily at Rome amongst the English brethren.

To him succeeded Brother Haymo, who, because of his kindness and gentleness, was ever striving to maintain the brethren in all charity and peace. He gave the habit to the Lord Bishop of Hereford, Ralph of Maidstone.<sup>1</sup> Now this was in accordance with a vision concerning Brother Haymo, which the Bishop had whilst he was yet Archdeacon of Chester; for it seemed to him that he was sitting and arranging the clergy in their places at a synod, and a boy came and threw water in his face, whereat he himself was immediately changed into a sickly and wretched youth; and he came to the bed on which Brother Haymo lay and besought that he might lay there too. Accordingly he had a happy end in the Order.

Brother Haymo ministered to the brethren for one year, and was then elected Minister-General.

He was succeeded by his Vicar, Brother William of Nottingham, who was unanimously elected and confirmed by those who nominated him.

Now Brother William was altogether without experience of the lesser offices, such as those of Guardian or Custos; nevertheless so strenuous was his government that throughout all the provinces there went the report of his zeal and good management.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix iii.

In those days it happened that two of the brethren who were very famous entered into the house of a certain franklin, who received them with honour and spread before them an abundant feast. And whilst they were at dinner the rector of the church came in and upbraided them for that they did not come to him. And he urged them to eat the flesh-meat which was set before them, but could not prevail over their frugality. Being angry, he cried out, "Eat, eat! for the cold kills your bodies as gluttony kills our souls." And, rising up, he went away.

The Minister, Brother Albert, used to say to his companion<sup>1</sup> when they came to the house of a spiritual friend, "Eat, my brother; for now we can do so without fear." But as far as he could he avoided the houses of seculars.

An incident which Brother William was wont to relate was this. Saint Stephen, founder of the Order of Grandmont, put a box into a secret and safe place, and forbade any of his brethren to go thither whilst he lived. The brethren therefore were anxious to know what might be in the box, more especially since the Saint had wished them to hold the box in great veneration as he himself did. Wherefore when he died the brethren without delay broke open the box and there found nothing but only a piece of paper, on which this was written: "Brother Stephen, founder of the Order of Grand-

<sup>1</sup> "Omne bonum nomine" (Cott. MS.).

mont,<sup>1</sup> salutes his brethren and beseeches them to keep themselves away from the company of secular persons. For just as whilst you knew not what was in the box you held it in honour, so does it happen between seculars and yourselves."

Once when Brother Albert was at Oxford a young brother was preaching, and with much boldness denounced great houses and abundance of food, but Brother Albert reproved him inasmuch as he was vainglorious.<sup>2</sup>

A story told by Brother Adam de Marisco is this. A certain boy, delicately nurtured, fell sick, and his father besought him, saying, "My son, by the love you have for me your father, eat, for you are my most dear son." But the boy replied that he was not his son. In like manner he replied to his mother, when she in similar words tenderly urged him to eat. They therefore asked him whose son he was, and he answered pertly and in anger, "I am the son of myself." Of such sort are they, said Brother Adam, who follow their own inclination and will.

When Brother Haymo was Minister of England he

<sup>1</sup> Saint Stephen could hardly have described himself as founder of the Order of Grandmont, since his monks did not acquire Grandmont till after his death. He himself lived and died at Muret (died A.D. 1124). The story, however, admirably describes the spirit of Saint Stephen and his love of solitude (see Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, February 8th).

<sup>2</sup> Saint Francis in his Rule (chap. ii.) expressly forbade his Friars "to judge those who were dressed in fine, soft clothes," etc.

said that certain troubles came upon the Order because the brethren had caused altars and chapels to be set up in their places, in order that these places might not be again converted to secular uses.<sup>1</sup> Such was his zeal for poverty that he appeared at a Provincial Chapter in a habit of torn and coarsest texture and sat upon the ground.

<sup>1</sup> Thereby securing these places to themselves and so violating the spirit of absolute poverty, whereby they must be always as pilgrims and strangers wherever they are, with no manner of title or fixed possession.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### OF THE PARTICULAR ADVANCEMENT OF CERTAIN BRETHREN.

**A**ND now, coming to the end of this narration, I deem it fitting to record how, during the very lifetime of many of the brethren who had planted the vineyard of the Friars Minor in the English Province, its branches spread out and flourishes. over this province and others, and so far flourished that brethren were raised to various dignities and offices as well outside the Order as within, and this was so especially with those brethren who had most profoundly humbled themselves. Thus there was Brother Nicholas who, being a lay-brother, was set to study, and afterwards became Confessor to Pope Innocent IV., and at length Bishop of Assisi. There was also a certain most gentle youth who received the habit as a lay-brother, to whom the Glorious Virgin appeared; and she placed her finger upon his mouth in sign that he would be a Preacher and a Reader; and not only did he become Preacher and Reader, but he also rose to high office in the Order.

But who would be able to tell as he ought of the singular advancement of those who, with wonderful fervour, entered the Order when the brethren first came to England? Because of their goodness, graduates in the universities and men of noble birth besought the caperone of probation, and afterwards many of these, as Preachers or Readers or as Superiors of the Order, did well and were found worthy of praise.

Of these Brother Eustace de Merc, who was for long Guardian of Oxford and afterwards Custos of

**Holy death  
of Brother  
Eustace de  
Merc.** York, even until his death observed his accustomed abstinence, watchings, and corporal austerities; but towards others he was always a man of angelic sweetness.

When he was dying he frequently uttered these words as from his inmost soul: "By thy Son, O Virgin, by the Father and the Paraclete, I pray thee be present at my dying hour and at my last going forth."

Brother Robert de Tornam, at first Guardian of Lynn and afterwards for many years Custos of Cam-

**Brother  
Robert de  
Tornam goes  
with the  
Crusaders.** bridge, with unspeakable fervour at last besought leave to go with the Crusaders to the Holy Land, where, in the discharge of a most difficult office, he won fame beyond measure both amongst the brethren and seculars. But in death he gave such signs of a great and noble salvation that no believer could doubt that he was saved.

Brother Stephen de Belase, also Guardian of Lynn



and afterwards Custos of Hereford, was of such sweetness and perfection that the zeal of his heart would manifest itself even in tears when he saw the austerity of religion relaxed. Wherefore having a great desire for quiet, he was freed from all offices, and his "fruits were unto holiness and his end life everlasting."<sup>1</sup>

Brother William Cook, a man naturally of great strength, because of his premature labours as Custos of London and other cares, nearly died of exhaustion. Wherefore he, too, at length resigned the active life for the contemplative, and, full of works, rested in peace.

Brother Augustine of happy memory, brother-german to Brother William of Nottingham, after having entered the household of the Lord Pope Innocent IV., next went with the Nottingham. Patriarch of Antioch, a nephew of the Pope, into Syria, and at length was made Bishop of Laodicea. He publicly related in the convent of London how he had been at Assisi on the festival of Saint Francis, and Pope Gregory was there. And when the Pope was about to preach, the brethren sang "Hunc Sanctus præelegerat"<sup>2</sup> whereat the Pope smiled. Now during his sermon the Pope told how two heresiarchs were converted at Venice, and were sent to him with letters

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 22.

<sup>2</sup> "This man the Saint had especially chosen."

from the Cardinals who were legates there; and in these letters it was written how these heretics one night saw our Lord Jesus Christ sitting as a Judge in the midst of His Apostles and of Religious of all Orders in the world, but they did not see there any Friars Minor, not even Saint Francis. Now one of the legates had been preaching, and had said that Saint Francis, because of the Stigmata, was greater than Saint John the Evangelist. But the heretics saw in their vision the Lord Jesus Himself reclining on the breast of Saint John, and Saint John on the breast of our Lord. And they took this as a certain confirmation of an opinion they held, that the legate had blasphemed. Therefore they were grievously scandalised and exclaimed against the sermon. When, behold! the most sweet Jesus with His own hands opened the wound in His side and Saint Francis was most clearly to be seen within His very breast. Then Jesus the most sweet closed the wound and kept the Saint within. The heretics, awakening, went forth on the morrow to find each other and each related to the other his dream. They then publicly confessed to the Cardinals, who, as has been said, sent them to the Pope, by whom they were fully absolved.

After the sermon there came two new soldiers to the Pope, and he placed upon the head of each a wreath of flowers. Whence arose the custom that all who would become soldiers should receive their arms at this festival. On this occasion the Pope celebrated

Mass on a table outside the church, because of the multitude of people.

When Brother Peter of Tewkesbury was Minister in Germany, by the grace of God he defended the state of the Order against the King and legate and many false brethren, so that the fame of his deed spread through many provinces, and his zeal for the truth was proved beyond doubt.

He won the particular affection of the Lord Bishop of Lincoln, from whom he frequently heard secret words of wisdom. The Bishop would sometimes say to him that unless the brethren fostered their studies and gave themselves diligently to the learning of the divine law, it would most assuredly happen to us as it had happened to other religious whom we see (oh, the misery of it!) walking in the darkness of ignorance.<sup>1</sup>

Now when Brother Peter was in Germany, he heard this story from Brother Mansuetus, Nuncio of the Lord Pope Alexander IV.<sup>2</sup> On the very day on which Pope Innocent IV. caused to be read in public audience the Brief, in which he declared against the Friars Preachers and Friars Minor on eight points, he lost the power of speech, nor did he afterwards utter any words

<sup>1</sup> Brewer has here inserted certain anecdotes concerning Bishop Grosseteste, taken from the margin of the Cottonian MS. These anecdotes I have put in Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> This Brother Mansuetus was sent to England as Papal Legate to Henry III. in 1262.

except these: "Because of his sin hast thou chastised man." But he very frequently invoked Saint Francis, for even when in health he had declared that from no other Saint had he experienced so many favours. Now the Lord Pope Alexander IV., when he was Bishop of Ostia, had foretold that the Lord would quickly take Pope Innocent from their midst, because of the favours he bestowed to the prejudice of the Order. Yet when he was dying his whole household deserted him except the Friars Minor. In like manner were the Popes Gregory and Honorius deserted, and that Innocent<sup>1</sup> at whose death Saint Francis himself was present. Brother Mansuetus also said that the Lord Pope Alexander IV. on the very day of his election suspended the Brief of Pope Innocent which had been issued against the Friars Preachers and the Friars Minor, and afterwards publicly revoked it. For Pope Innocent had decreed that all Friars should be excommunicated who allowed any of the parishioners of any church to be present at their Mass on a feast-day; and so in other matters. Brother Mansuetus also said that no beggar (I will not say no man) died such a miserable and wretched death as a Pope.<sup>2</sup> He further related how a certain brother clothed in sackcloth was standing and praying in an oratory, when

<sup>1</sup> Innocent III.

<sup>2</sup> The fate of most mediæval Sovereigns seems alike in this matter, but I think it was due not merely to the fact that they were surrounded by mercenary attendants, but to the terror of death which inspires peoples in the earlier phases of civilisation.

he saw a vast army of five thousand knights plunging into the sea, and the sea hissed as though they were burning brass. And one of the knights told the brother that it was the Emperor Frederic entering into Mount Etna. Now at that same moment the Emperor Frederic died.<sup>1</sup>

The same Brother Mansuetus told how when he was a boy he was instructed by the Friars Minor to hold the blessed Eucharist in exceeding reverence. Therefore, whilst he was still a small boy, that he might worthily communicate on a certain Easter Day he fasted almost the whole of Lent. And, behold! on the very Easter morning, when all the people communicated, a certain wicked and infamous man named Getius went to Communion, and having received without reverence, immediately went aside and sat upon a bench and began to gossip with those standing near, taking no care to retain the sacred particle in his mouth, when lo! Brother Mansuetus beheld the Eucharist go forth from the man's mouth and fall to the ground some distance away. Immediately Brother Mansuetus went and told the priest, a man very venerable, what he had seen, who straightway commanded him to go and search for the Host where it had fallen. And, going to search for it, he immediately found it in exactly the same spot, though for some time the people had been pass-

The reader will remember that in the Middle Ages Mount Etna was supposed to be the entrance to the infernal regions.

ing up and down near the spot as they approached the altar. The boy therefore, with much reverence, received the said Host and all the consecrated Hosts which remained upon the altar, and was unspeakably confirmed in faith.

Brother Peter, the Minister of England, also related this incident. He was on terms of great friendship with Sir Galfrid le Despencer and his family, and it happened once that he came to Sir Galfrid's house, and the son, by name John, a mere child, came to him as was his wont, and was most friendly. Now the boy went with his mother to the chapel to assist at Father Peter's Mass, but afterwards when he returned into the house he avoided the said Father, nor could his mother by any persuasion prevail upon the boy to come to him. Whereupon the mother sought to know why he avoided the Father, and the boy replied that he had seen him eat up a baby at the altar in the chapel, and was afraid lest he should be eaten up too!

Brother Garinus de Essewel,<sup>1</sup> who entered the Order when quite a youth, made such progress in his studies that he lectured solemnly in many places and gained the admiration of many people. Moreover, he manifested great wisdom in his dealings with the great ones of the State, and managed the affairs of the Order praiseworthily. In preaching and the love of contemplation he wonder-

<sup>1</sup> Erwelle (Cott.).

fully excelled. He died before the altar at Southampton, at the ninth hour,<sup>1</sup> embracing the crucifix. Now it happened that at Salisbury a certain Brother John, who had long been dead, appeared to Brother Simon of Wimbourne, and said that he himself was in a state of happiness, and that Brother Garinus had without any delay passed through purgatory and had come unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

To such perfection, indeed, had the English Province attained that the Minister-General, Brother John of **Testimony of Parma**, frequently exclaimed when he was **Brother John** in England, "Would that such a province **of Parma to** were placed in the middle of the earth that **English** it might be an example to all the churches!" **Friars.** The same Minister-General it was who held the Chapter of the Province of England at Oxford, and confirmed the provincial statutes concerning the straitness and poverty of our buildings. But when he gave the brethren the option of dismissing their Minister-Provincial or of confirming him in office, they unanimously petitioned that he should be confirmed.

Brother William of Nottingham sometimes told how the Lord Bishop of Lincoln of holy memory, at the time when he was lecturing to the Friars **Bishop** Minor at Oxford, preached at a chapter of **Grosseteste** the brethren on poverty, and in his sermon **preaches on** put the beggar's estate as the degree of **poverty.** poverty most nigh to the attainment of heavenly

<sup>1</sup> i.e. at three o'clock p.m., the hour of the Crucifixion.

things. But afterwards he said to Brother William that there was yet a higher degree of poverty, namely, that of living by one's own labour. Wherefore, he said, the Beguins were the most holy and perfect religious because they lived by their own labour, and did not burden the world with their exactions.

The same Father also related how there was a certain novice who wished to fast, and he informed his Master that he proposed little by little to see what he could do. Gladly the Master gave him leave. After he had gone on for some little while the Master would ask him how he was, and he would reply that he was well. But at length the novice began to fear lest he should get weak, and he spoke of his fear to the Master, who replied, "In God's name, go quickly and eat and drink lest thou fail, for already thy faith hath failed thee. It was thus when Peter feared that he began to sink."

Brother William used also to say that it behoved us to consider the mind of Saint Francis and his intention in giving us the Rule, otherwise we should gather superfluities into the Order as insensibly as one's beard grows upon one's face. Also that we have to resist the oncomings of worldliness more than at first sight might be thought necessary, otherwise the world will bear us down farther than we desire, just as the river carries those who, wishing to reach the opposite bank, set their prow directly towards it.

**How a certain novice wished to fast and failed.**

**That we must consider the intention of Saint Francis.**



Further, he would say that a man never knows whether it will pain him to leave a particular place until he has to leave, just as he only  
**Brother William on detachment.** realises that he has hair on his head when it is pulled.

He himself was very learned in the Holy Scriptures, and zealously fostered the study of them with others.  
**His love for the Scriptures.** At table, outside the refectory, he would always have read a lesson of the Holy Gospel, and, meanwhile, he would ponder most devoutly upon the words which were read, but the Holy Name of Jesus he venerated with particular affection; wherefore he compiled some most useful notes upon one of the four books of *Clementine Homilies*, and caused these *Homilies* to be completely transcribed by the brethren.

He sat long in meditation, especially after Matins, when he would not hear confessions nor give counsel as his predecessors had done. He used to say  
**His piety.** that as it is a greater evil to lay down false principles of action than to do evil actions themselves, so wrong opinions concerning the state of the Order are worse than imperfect observances. With the greatest difficulty could  
**Other sayings of Brother William.** he be got to listen to an accusation against another, unless the accuser were willing to say what he had to say in the presence of many witnesses, and he was above all else anxious to root out the vice of suspiciousness. He resolutely declined friendships with

nobles and with women, and with a greatness of soul to be admired, held the wrath of the powerful to be of little concern in matters of justice. He would sometimes say that the great ones of the State by their counsels ensnare their friends, and that women, being deceitful and malicious, by their blandishments will turn the heads even of the devout. He spared no endeavour to restore the good name of His charity. those who were of ill report when he thought they had repented, and with much wisdom and insight he comforted those who were desolate in spirit, especially those who held offices in the Order.

Now when he had governed the province of England for about nine years, he was relieved of the ministry at the Chapter of Metz, and was sent as delegate of the Chapter to the Pope. But when he had come, with the Minister-General, as far as Genoa, his companion, Brother Richard, was struck down by the pestilence, and, all the others taking flight, Brother William remained to console his companion, until he himself was struck down in like manner and died. Now the brethren, hearing that he had been relieved of the ministry, but not knowing of his death, held a chapter and re-elected him Minister-Provincial, which, when the Minister-General heard of, moved rather by feeling than by calm reason, he convoked the chapter again through the Vicar, Brother Gregory de Bossellis, and commanded that no Friar who had been dismissed from office by the General Chapter

should be re-elected in the Provincial Chapter; but he left the confirmation of the Minister-Elect to Brothers John de Kethene, Adam de Marisco, and John of Stamford. Thus Brother Peter of Tewkesbury was elected and at the same time confirmed.<sup>1</sup>

Brother Peter it was who at first welcomed the Brethren of Penance of Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup> and recommended them to our brethren in the Chapter of London. These brethren had their origin in Provence at the time of the Council of Lyons, being founded by a certain novice who had been expelled from our Order. In the third year of Brother Peter's ministry there came to England the Friars of the Order of Martyrs whose founder was a certain Martin, who at Paris was made the butt of the German nobles.

<sup>1</sup> Brewer has here inserted the following paragraph, which seems of the nature of a marginal note: "At the dismissal of Brother Elias, Pope Gregory was asked if he might be re-elected, and the Pope replied that he should not." Certain sayings of Brother William of Nottingham, taken from the margin of the Cottonian MS. are also put here, which will be found in Appendix II.

<sup>2</sup> Also called "Brothers of the Sack."

## APPENDIX I.

### CERTAIN SAYINGS OF BISHOP GROSSETESTE AND OF SAINT EDMUND, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.<sup>1</sup>

**B**ISHOP GROSSETESTE once told Brother John de Dya that he would take to himself six or seven clerks from Brother John's country and give them benefices in his church; and that these clerks, though they might be ignorant of the English tongue, would yet preach by their example. This proves that **Bishop Grosseteste and foreign clerics.** when he refused to institute those clerks sent over by the Pope, or the nephews of the Cardinals, it was not because they could not speak the English tongue, but because they came seeking temporalities. Wherefore when a certain lawyer said to him, "It is decreed by the Bulls," he replied: "Nay, it is decreed by dogs."<sup>2</sup> Then, rising up, he confessed in English before the persons presented by the Cardinals and struck his breast, at the same time weeping and groaning; whereupon they retired in confusion.

Another time a chamberlain of our Lord the Pope demanded from the Bishop a fee of a thousand pounds when he was visiting the Curia, saying the Bishop **Grosseteste and the Pope's chamberlain.** could borrow the money from the merchants; to whom the Bishop replied that he would not give occasion to the merchants to sin mortally,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the margin of the Cottonian MS.

<sup>2</sup> "Canones hoc volunt." "Imo, canes hoc volunt."

<sup>3</sup> On account of usury.

but that if he arrived safely in England he would deposit the sum in the Temple at London, otherwise the chamberlain would not receive a penny.

**A saying.** Another saying of his was this to a Friar Preacher: "Three things are needful to keep one in bodily health—food, sleep, and a joke."

He once enjoined as a penance upon a brother of a melancholy disposition that he drink a tankard full of the best wine, and when the brother had reluctantly drank, the Bishop said to him: "My dear brother, if you were given such a penance frequently you would of a surety have a better conscience."

Brother Peter of Tewkesbury has related how when the Lord Bishop of Lincoln was first promoted to his See he was much in want of horses, and his seneschal came to him as he was at his books and announced that two White Monks had come to present him with two beautiful palfreys. But when he was urged to accept the palfreys and to declare the monks exempt,<sup>1</sup> he would not at all consent, nor would he even move from his seat, but replied, "If I accept these palfreys they may run with me at their tails to hell."

The Lord Robert Grosseteste was at times grievously hurt because the Minister-Provincial would not allow a certain brother who had sometimes stayed with the Bishop in his house to stay there any more, since the Bishop would not converse with any other of the brethren, not even his own confessor. But Brother Peter told him that if he gave the brethren all his goods but still did not give them the affection of his heart, they would care nothing for him.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* from episcopal jurisdiction in certain matters.

Then the Bishop began to weep, and said: "Shame upon you sinners, for that you grievously afflict me! For it is not possible for me not to love you, even if I set my face against you." In truth the brethren would be eating with him at his own table and yet he would not speak a word to them.

**Sayings of Grosseteste.** The Bishop told Brother Peter that places near the water were not healthy unless situated on a height.

Also he said that it greatly delighted him to see the patched sleeves of the brethren.

He said, too, that sauce is better with a little pepper than with ginger.

Again, he said that he rejoiced when he saw that his scholars did not absent themselves from the lectures which he had carefully prepared, since otherwise there would be wanting to him an occasion of vainglory, and he was unwilling to lose any of his merits.

Brother Peter of Tewkesbury also related how some clerks attached to the household of Saint Edmund besought **Saint Edmund of Canterbury.** a post for a relative of theirs who was a courier. But the Saint replied, "If his carriage is broken I will have it repaired out of respect to your wishes, or if it cannot be mended I will give him a new one; but know for a certainty that I will not change his post."

The same holy Bishop was once offered some precious gems, and his household urged him to accept them, but he replied, "If I take them, I must wear them; to take them and to wear them is much the same thing."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Si prenderem, penderem; inter prendere et pendere non est nisi una litera."

## APPENDIX II.

### CERTAIN SAYINGS OF BROTHER WILLIAM OF NOTTINGHAM.<sup>1</sup>

**T**HERE were certain of the brethren who held that they ought in no wise to contract debts; wherefore Brother William told me that they ought by no means to bind themselves to discharge a debt, nor to fix a date for the discharge, but that they could in conscience bind themselves faithfully to do what they could to discharge the debt. And he said there were a hundred cases in which the brethren might lawfully incur a debt.

**Other sayings.** Another saying of his was that a brother would not sin who handled money in distributing the alms of others to the poor.<sup>2</sup>

Yet another saying of his was that he found it well to take a little recreation after holding Visitations, in order to divert his mind from what he had heard therein.

To me he once said that the sweet Jesus would raise up a new Order to stimulate our own Order in the way of perfection; and this saying, I think, was fulfilled when the Order of Penance of Jesus Christ was founded.

He had already in the Chapter of Stamford recommended

<sup>1</sup> These anecdotes, though they are recorded in marginal notes in the Cottonian MS. yet bear the impress of Eccleston's style.

<sup>2</sup> See the Rule of 1221, chap. viii.

the Friars of the Order of Saint Augustine to the charity Welcomes of the brethren, and long before this had Friars of established a friendship between our brethren other Orders. wherever they were, and the Friars of Mount Carmel, whom the Lord Richard de Grey had brought into England on his return from Syria. But the Friars of the Order of the most Holy Trinity had been long established in England.<sup>1</sup> This Order was founded by John, a Master in Theology, because of a vision he had of Jesus Christ one day during the Pontificate of Innocent III., whilst he was celebrating Mass in the presence of the Bishop and clergy of Paris.

Brother William related how he once stayed for a long while at our convent in Rome, and the brethren Brother William there had nothing to eat but chestnuts, yet he grows fat on became so fat that he was ashamed of himself. chestnuts. He further told me how, when he was still a youth in his father's house, many beggars came there to beg, and he would give them his own bread and then His early love of beg of them a crust in return, for it seemed to poverty. him that a hard crust received in alms for the love of God was sweeter than the delicate food he and his companions were accustomed to eat. Wherefore that they might thus sweeten their bread, he and other little boys would go and beg from each other in the name of God.

<sup>1</sup> The Brothers of the Sack settled in England in 1257; the Augustinians in 1254; the Carmelites in 1250; and the Trinitarians in 1224.



### APPENDIX III.

FROM THE "LIBER DE LAUDIBUS."

**B**ERNARD of Besse, in his *Liber de Laudibus*, relates the following story of Ralph of Maidstone: "The Father, Brother Haymo of holy memory, and formerly Minister-General, related that there was a certain prelate in England who was taken up in vision unto the heavenly mansions, and he found there amongst the religious none of the Friars Minor. He was marvelling greatly at this when there came unto him the most beautiful of ladies—the most blessed Mother of God, who enquired what matter was troubling his mind; to whom the Bishop replied that he marvelled why in that blessedness he saw none of the Friars Minor, whom the Church upon earth reputed so highly. She replied: 'Come with me, and I will point out to you where they dwell.' Then she showed him the brethren in close companionship with Christ the Lord. 'Behold,' she said, 'they are beneath the wings of the Judge; seek safety for thy soul with them.' The Bishop, considering the grace accorded him in this vision and the salutary counsel of the Mother of God, entered the Order of the Friars Minor, with the consent of the Lord Pope Gregory IX. . . . The said Bishop is believed to have been the Lord Ralph of whose entrance into the Order there is evidence, and who was a Master in Theology and Bishop of Hereford."

Another story related by Bernard of Besse, "without doubt," say the Editors of *Analecta Francescana* (iii. p. 221), refers to Ralph of Colebridge. It runs: "Besides this Ralph (of Maidstone) there are said to have been two other Ralphs, both doctors of theology, of whom one entered the Order at Paris in this manner. Once when he was studying he fell asleep at his book, and the devil appeared to him, and threatening to take away from him his sight, said: 'I will cast thee aside as dirt upon a dungheap.'<sup>1</sup> The Master awakened and again fell asleep, and the devil a second time in vision threatened him both by word and by putting his fingers into his eyes. But the Master cast off the devil saying: 'Thou shalt not cast me aside as dirt, but I will cast thee.'

"And behold, the following day as he was sitting in the Reader's chair, he received a letter from a Bishop in England offering him a fat benefice. But he, interpreting the riches to be the dungheap upon which the devil wished to cast him aside, leaving all things, entered the Order of the Friars Minor."

<sup>1</sup> "Ego te cum stercorebus exœcabo."

## LIST OF THE MINISTERS-PROVINCIAL OF THE ENGLISH PROVINCE.

(From the Register of the Friars Minor in London, published  
by Brewer, *Mon. Franc.*, i.)

Bro. Agnellus of Pisa.

Bro. Albert of Pisa, who was afterwards fourth Minister-General: died [at Rome].

Bro. Haymo of Faversham, an Englishman, who also afterwards was [Minister-General].

Bro. William of Nottingham, a most holy man of God: died at Genoa.

Bro. Peter of Tewkesbury,<sup>1</sup> who was first Minister-Provincial of Germany, and afterwards of England. He is buried at Bedford.

Bro. John Stamford: buried at Lynn.

Bro. Peter Swynfield: buried at Leicester.

Bro. Thomas Bungay, D.D. Oxon., buried at Northampton.

Bro. John Peckham, D.D. Paris and Oxon.; Reader to the Roman Court and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. Buried among the monks [in the cathedral].

<sup>1</sup> In other lists, after Peter of Tewkesbury we find:—

Bro. William of Abingdon.

Bro. John the Englishman.

(See *The Antiquities of the English Franciscans*. London, 1726.)

- Bro. Hugh of Bath :<sup>1</sup> who was confirmed [in the Provincialate] but died before the letters of confirmation were received.
- Bro. Robert Cross, D.D. Oxon., buried at Bridgwater.
- Bro. William Gainsborough, D.D. Oxon., Reader to the Roman Court and afterwards Bishop of Worcester : buried at Beauvais.
- Bro. Roger Merston, D.D. Oxon. : buried at Norwich.
- Bro. Hugh Hartlepool, D.D. Oxon. : buried among the brethren at Assisi.
- Bro. Adam of Lincoln, D.D. Oxon. : buried at Lincoln. He did wonders.<sup>2</sup>
- Bro. Richard Conynton, D.D. Oxon. : buried at Cambridge.
- Bro. William Nottingham, D.D. Oxon. : who annotated one of the four gospels : he is buried at Leicester.
- Bro. Roger of Denemed, D.D. Cantab. : buried at Salisbury.
- Bro. John Rodyngton, D.D. Oxon. ; a very holy man : buried at Bedford.<sup>3</sup>
- Bro. John Went, D.D. Oxon., who did wonderful things in his life. He is buried at Hereford.
- Bro. William Titmarsh, D.D. Cantab. : buried at Bedford.
- Bro. Roger Conway, D.D. Oxon. : buried in London. He strenuously defended the Order at the Roman Court against the Archbishop of Armagh.
- Bro. Simon Tunshed, D.D. Oxon. : buried at Brushyard.
- Bro. Robert of Wilsted, D.D. Oxon. : buried in London.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere called Hugh de Brampton.

<sup>2</sup> Other lists place next :—

Bro. Richard Compton, D.D.

Bro. William Occham, D.D.

<sup>3</sup> Other lists place next :—

Bro. John de Bronth, D.D.

<sup>4</sup> Other lists place next :—

Bro. John of Mardeston.

- Bro. John Marchley,<sup>1</sup> D.D. Oxon.: buried at York.  
 Bro. Thomas Kingsbury, D.D. Oxon.: buried at Nottingham.  
 Bro. John Tyssington, D.D. Oxon.: buried in London.  
 Bro. Nicholas Fakenham, D.D. Oxon.: buried at Colchester.  
 Bro. John Louche, D.D. Cantab., who was afterwards Bishop of London: buried at Cardiff.  
 Bro. William Butler, D.D.: buried at Oxford.  
 Bro. Vincent Boys, D.D.: buried at Oxford.  
 Bro. Peter Russell,<sup>2</sup> D.D.: buried at Oxford.  
 Bro. Robert Walleys, D.D. Oxon. He was elected and confirmed, but died in France before receiving the letters of confirmation.  
 Bro. John David, D.D. Cantab.: buried at Cardiff.  
 Bro. Roger Day [or Donwe], D.D. Oxon.: buried at Ware.  
 Bro. Richard Leeke,<sup>3</sup> D.D. Oxon.: buried at Lichfield.  
 Bro. Thomas Radnor, D.D. Oxon.: buried at Reading.  
 Bro. William Goddard, senior, most learned doctor of Oxford: buried in London.<sup>4</sup>  
 Bro. John Percival, D.D. Oxon.: buried in London.  
 Bro. John Standish, D.D. Oxon.: afterwards Bishop of St. Asaph.  
 Bro. Richard Brinckley, D.D. Cantab.: buried at Cambridge.

<sup>1</sup> Other lists place next:—

Bro. Thomas Heber.

Bro. Thomas Burbury.

<sup>2</sup> Other lists place Bro. Thomas Kingsbury immediately after Bro. Peter Russell.

<sup>3</sup> Other lists place next:—

Bro. William Goddard, senior, D.D.

<sup>4</sup> Here follow in other lists:—

Bro. Peter Secundus.

Bro. Thomas Walleys, D.D.

Bro. Robert Wells.

Bro. William Goddard, junior, D.D.

## LIST OF MINISTERS-PROVINCIAL 245

Here the list of the London Register closes. Other lists follow on with :—

Bro. Stephen Baron.

Bro. William, afterwards a Definitor-General of the Order.

Bro. John Forest [put to death under Henry VIII.].

It is difficult, however, to place the Provincial Ministers in the years immediately preceding the dissolution, as the Friars of the Observance had Vicars-Provincial, who as Commissaries-General exercised, by papal authority, some measure of jurisdiction over the entire body of the Friars in England.

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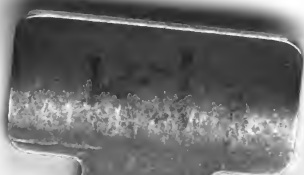
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